

BLACKFOOT TRAILS

E. A. CORBETT

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A TYPICAL PLAINS INDIAN

BLACKFOOT TRAILS

BY

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TORONTO: THE MACMILLAN COMPANY OF
CANADA LIMITED, AT ST. MARTIN'S HOUSE

1934

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Printed in Canada

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BIBLIOTHEQUE

du

**COLLEGE SAINT-JEAN
EDMONTON ALBERTA**

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this little volume is to make readily available to the children of western Canada something of the history, the customs and legends of the greatest of all the Plains Indians, the Blackfoot. The writer does not pretend to have any extensive acquaintance with, or knowledge of the conditions of the Indians of today. Historical notes and incidents have been gathered together here from the journals of fur-traders and explorers, as well as from such authorities as Catlin, D. Jenness of Ottawa, Professor Webb of the University of Texas, Father Lacombe, Chief Buffalo Child Long Lance, James Willard Schultze, George Bird Grinnell, Canon Middleton and many others.

In other words, this book is not an original document in any sense. It is a compilation, in what we hope is readable form, of some of the most interesting material available concerning the early history and habits of life of these once magnificent people of the plains.

BLACKFOOT TRAILS

CHAPTER I

THE RED MAN'S HOME

MANY theories have been advanced concerning the origin of the Indians of the western plains. According to Dr. Marius Barbeau and Diamond Jenness of the National Museum at Ottawa, the most likely one is that they crossed the Behring Straits—at that time dry land—from Siberia, some 20,000 years ago. As this migration developed over a period of centuries, the advance guard made its way across the mountains into the Mackenzie valley, and southward on to the open prairies. The great new land thus discovered offered food and clothing in abundance, and as the movement continued, the people broke up into tribal groups, developed different characteristics and in time different dialects, until it is believed as many as forty-two distinct languages were spoken on the North American plains from the Saskatchewan to Mexico. If we take a map of western Canada and follow the Mackenzie River valley from the Arctic southward to Great Slave Lake and Lake Athabasca and out into what we now call Alberta, we may group the Northern and Plains Indians in sufficiently accurate outline geographically for general purposes. Bordering the Arctic Ocean from the

Rocky Mountains eastward to Labrador were the Eskimo, who numbered perhaps 30,000 originally, but are now not more than half that many. Southward along the Mackenzie River there were numbers of small nomadic tribes, such as the Caribou-Eaters, Dog-ribs, Hare-lips, Slaves and many others, always bordering upon starvation. In what we now call the Peace River country were the Beavers, and east of them, around Lake Athabasca, were the Athapaskans. Occupying a wide strip of territory between Lake Athabasca and North Saskatchewan in a southerly direction, and eastward from the Rocky Mountains to Hudson Bay were the three main groupings of the great Cree family: the Woods Crees, the Plains Crees, and bordering on Hudson Bay, the Muskeg Crees. From Rocky Mountain House on the north Saskatchewan, eastward to the present Saskatchewan border, along the Red Deer River, and southward into Montana was the Blackfoot confederacy made up of the Blackfoot proper, the Bloods, the Pie-gans, and their allies, the Gros Ventres. Eastward again, along the south Saskatchewan were the Assiniboines, the Ojibway, the Sioux, who came into the country from Minnesota in 1862.

Of all the Plains Indians, the Blackfoot were most feared because of their daring, relentless spirit, their skill with weapons, and their amazing horsemanship.

It was undoubtedly as a result of their early mastery of the horse that the Blackfoot confederacy gained complete ascendancy over all the

other Indians of western Canada. It is not definitely known when the Blackfoot first began to use the horse in hunting the buffalo, and in war-raids upon other tribes. It must have been, however, very early in the nineteenth century, for, as we shall see later, Anthony Hendry in 1754 found them well-mounted and in possession of large numbers of magnificent animals.

Contrary to common belief, those little wall-eyed pintos and mustangs formerly existing in such large numbers in Alberta and usually referred to as Cayuses were not natives of the western plains, but were descendants of a noble race of horses brought into Mexico by Spanish invaders early in the sixteenth century. As ranching developed in Mexico under Spanish direction, large herds of horses escaped or were turned loose owing to lack of markets, and in the course of two hundred years or more spread northward in roving bands of so-called wild horses, until they made their way in ever-increasing numbers into Montana and the Dakotas, and so across the Canadian border.

Unlike the Indians of the North, who were often on the verge of starvation because of the failure of their food supply and because of a general lack of foresight in curing and storing food, the Blackfoot was always well-nourished and well-clothed. The great herds of buffalo that roamed the prairies during the summer months supplied the plains tribes with everything they required to make life prosperous and secure, and a never-failing supply of good meat

assured the Blackfoot children of magnificent physical development. Added to this plentiful supply of good food and clothing which played a large part in their physical fitness, was a civil and military discipline in camp life by means of which the young were submitted to the sternest moral and spiritual training.

The Blackfoot were essentially a clean people, and one of the rigid and unfailing rules of camp life required that every male old enough to walk should plunge into cold water every morning upon rising from bed; or if water was not available in winter, the morning bath was taken standing naked in the snow.

The system of civil and military government as described in David Thompson's narrative, assured the whole confederacy of an orderly and well-managed corporate life. At the time when Thompson knew them the Blackfoot were undoubtedly at the height of their power. They had driven the Kootenai Indians back into the mountains and not only ruled the Western Canadian scene, but were known and feared on the Missouri plains and south through Montana to the Yellowstone country.

The system of government practised by the Blackfoot is described in detail by David Thompson. According to his narrative, based upon years of intimate acquaintance with these people, they had a civil and a military chief. The first was called Sakatow, the orator, and his office was hereditary in the family. He was responsible for order and discipline throughout

the tribe, and had under his command a company of couriers who travelled from one camp to another delivering orders of the day, and collecting news. The information thus gathered was made known to the lodges each day at sunset, somewhat after the fashion of a town-crier. In addition to his couriers, the civil chief had charge of the police force, whose function it was to quell all civil disturbances, keep order in camp, and strictly supervise the nightly games of chance with which the young men entertained themselves.

The war chief, on the other hand, concerned himself solely with the training of his young men in the arts of war, and in leading his tribal forces against the enemy. The civil chief might be a small man, given to chatter and gossip, but the war-chief was usually a man of mighty stature and given to silence. Sakamappi, Thompson's friend, was 6 feet 7 inches in height, and was renowned as a man who kept his own council.

According to observers of early Indian customs one of the besetting weaknesses of all the plains tribes was their inordinate love for games of chance. The game which seems to have been a favourite both among the Crees and the Blackfoot was the game of the Elk's tooth, which was played after the fashion of the old game of "Jenkins up, Jenkins on the Board", or "Button, Button, who's got the Button".

A detailed account of the way in which the

various games of chance were practised among the Blackfoot is found in Thompson's narrative as edited by J. B. Tyrrell. For our purposes here, a story told by Father Lacombe will serve to illustrate the Indians' passion for gambling.

"There is no trophy so glorious for a Red-skin as a scalp taken from an enemy defeated in battle; the scalps that he hangs from his belt were, for the Indian, the final proof of his courage and skill as a warrior. Not only so, but no one can pretend to be a warrior or a brave man, or to enjoy the esteem of his tribe, unless he can decorate himself with several of these bloody tokens of his prowess. Also, the Indian never hesitates to go upon any expedition however dangerous it may be, so long as it offers an opportunity of bringing home several scalps.

"One day a Cree and a Blackfoot each left his tribe on an expedition of this kind. They were both young and eager to distinguish themselves. They dreamed always of winning scalps in battle. For several days, with all the precaution usual on such adventures, they travelled without seeing anyone. The vast prairie seemed deserted, no other movement or sound than that of the wind in the great trees by the river bank. Suddenly at the summit of a hill which each one climbed from a different side, the two young savages came face to face with each other. Now the Indian does not like open combat; if he is going to

attack an enemy he likes to do so by surprise. Consequently when these two young men found themselves face to face they at once dropped their weapons and began to make friendly signs to each other. The usual salutations concluded, the peace-pipe was lighted and they sat down, and after some conversation in the sign language, they decided to have what they called a 'hand game' or the game of the Red Deer's tooth.

"Preparations were soon made, and each piled all his possessions—pipe, rifle, clothing, trophies, etc., on the ground beside him. The game commenced; the player who won the toss took two small sticks and passed them from one hand to the other with great rapidity, at the same time accompanying each movement with a wild sort of chant calculated to distract the attention of his enemy. Suddenly the movement ceased, and the two hands were extended in front of the player's body. Then the opposing player must guess which hand held the sticks. If he guessed correctly he took the sticks and it was his turn to play. If he was wrong he handed over some article of his possessions. So the game went on until the Cree had lost everything he owned to the Blackfoot. The Blackfoot rose to go. 'Wait', said the Cree, 'I am not satisfied. Will you play some more?' 'But you have nothing left to bet on the game; what do you wish to play with?' 'I have something worth more than anything we have played

with yet,' replied the Cree. 'What is that?' said the Blackfoot. 'My scalp,' said the Cree. The Blackfoot grunted with delight. Never would he have thought to suggest such a thing. He felt sure he would gain the victory and would thus achieve his young ambition—an enemy's scalp. On the other hand, the Cree felt that surely at last fortune would turn in his favour and he would regain his possessions.

"The game began again, and this time with an intensity that revealed itself in the wild chanting of the Blackfoot, now sure of his victory. Fortune did not change, and in a few minutes the poor Cree saw his last chance disappear. Without changing for an instant the calm expression with which he had watched all his equipment disappear, the unfortunate Cree knelt before his conqueror. The Blackfoot, with what Father Lacombe calls 'a ferocious cold-bloodedness', seized the scalp-lock in his fist, and with a sure hand traced a bloody circle on the other's skull and violently tore off the scalp; then without a groan or a cry of pain, the mutilated Cree went and washed his bleeding head in the stream. The Blackfoot followed him and using his kerchief bound up the Cree's head. Then silently the two sat down again and began to smoke the peace pipe.

"So strange had been the circumstances of his victory that the Blackfoot did not feel comfortable about it, in spite of his fatalism.

'Cree!' said he, 'I pity you and I cannot let you go naked and scalped. Take back your gun and your ammunition, accept some provisions in order that you do not die of hunger on the way home. Put back on your shoulders the clothing I have taken from you. Your scalp is sufficient to prove my good fortune. I will wear it at my belt as a trophy of my victory.' A look of joy shone in the eyes of the unfortunate Cree. 'You have given me back all that I have lost except my scalp, and that I leave with you without a single regret. You have earned it fairly and it will give you a place of honour among your people. But since now I am once more in possession of some goods, I would like to play again.' This remarkable audacity disturbed the Blackfoot, but he at once took off his weapons and clothing and with great dignity replied: 'Since you are not yet satisfied with your misfortune I accept.' And once more the game began, and this time with increased passion and excitement. Who would win? Would fortune continue to strip the vanquished Cree of all his possessions. No, this time she changed her favourite, and slowly but surely the Blackfoot saw his equipment pass into the hands of the Cree until he was despoiled of all he owned. The vanquished had become the conqueror, and like the Cree the Blackfoot soon found himself with nothing to stake except his scalp. Like the Cree also he placed that in play and held himself with the same high

courage. He lost, and without a sigh prepared himself for the horrible operation. With the same fine triumph on his countenance, the Cree traced the gory circle on the Blackfoot's head and wrenched the scalp from his skull.

"'You are brave,' said the Cree. 'I do not wish to be at enmity with you. Take your arms and your clothing and go back to the camp of your people with my scalp. And I will go back to my people brandishing your scalp. We shall both arrive covered with glory and no one henceforth will be able to doubt our courage and our fortitude.'

"Thus terminated this scene of horror. Both warriors, satisfied with the success of their expedition, smoked again the pipe of peace and turned towards home, mutilated but proud. Thus do all wars between individuals or nations end. Nobody wins anything but pain and mutilation."

CHAPTER II

THE FIRST GLIMPSE OF WHITE MEN

WE get our first information about the Blackfoot from the Journal of Anthony Hendry, who was sent out by the Hudson's Bay Company in the summer of 1754, to investigate the extent to which French traders from Montreal were breaking in upon the fur-trading rights of the ancient Company.

Hendry was a young Englishman who had been in trouble in the old country as a result of certain smuggling activities, and had been sent out to Hudson Bay as an apprentice in the service of the "Gentlemen Adventurers into Hudson's Bay".

For almost a century the Hudson's Bay Company had done little or nothing to explore the vast territory at its back door. Trade was satisfactory and within a few years after the Company had established itself on the rocky shores of Hudson Bay, furs were arriving in ever-increasing quantities from as far north as Great Slave Lake and as far west as the Rocky Mountains.

It is true, of course, that Henry Kellsey ventured inland on a voyage of exploration in 1691-92, but no very authentic evidence exists as to the exact country over which he travelled.

Anthony Hendry left York Factory with a large company of Indians—probably Muskeg Crees—on June 26th, 1754. Following the Hayes River he made his way by a somewhat devious route to the Saskatchewan, and was probably the first Englishman to see this noble stream, soon to become the great arterial highway over which millions of dollars' worth of furs were transported on the way to Montreal and London.

Twenty-two miles upstream from the point where he entered the river he came to a French Fort, operated by a Monsieur de la Corne, of Montreal. Here he was entertained hospitably enough. Six miles farther on, Hendry left the Saskatchewan, paddled sixteen miles across a lake on the south side, and from there followed the Carrot River to its source. On July 27th, he left his canoes and continued his journey by land. He crossed the South Saskatchewan a few miles above the site of the present city of Saskatoon. Still travelling in a south-westerly direction he crossed the Red Deer River not far from where Drumheller now stands, towards the middle of October. Three days later he came up with the Blackfoot. It must have been a thrilling experience for the young Englishman; no doubt he had heard many tales of the Blackfoot's haughty temper and his fierce and relentless spirit in time of war. On a distant hill overlooking a wide valley Hendry could see the main Blackfoot encampment, and riding over the plain between, a group of well-mounted horse-

men coming to meet him. Speaking in the sign language common to all the Plains' tribes, Hendry's interpreter assured the Blackfoot they were friends, and with the horsemen leading the way, Hendry and his party marched into the temporary village of the Blackfoot. Two hundred teepees were pitched in two long parallel rows, and down this main street the Englishman walked while hundreds of eyes watched from the tent-flaps and looked for the first time upon a pale-face.

At the end of the street stood a great lodge large enough to contain fifty persons. This was the home of the Great Chief of the Blackfoot and thither Hendry was conducted. These large council lodges are described so frequently by the early travellers in Western Canada that a note in passing concerning their construction may not be out of place.

The Council tents were made of soft-tanned buffalo skins, trimmed to fit, and sewed with strong sinew thread. Sometimes as many as forty hides were used to make a lodge 24 feet in diameter. Such a meeting place would be supported by lodge poles 35 to 40 feet long and so heavy that an Indian pony could only drag three or four of them at a time. As many as 30 poles were frequently used to support the huge skin covering used as a roof. All round the inside was a second wall of leather about six feet high attached to a raw-hide rope running from pole to pole. This was for ventilation, as the outside wall was not pegged close to the

ground, and in this way the air entered under it and passed up between the two walls, creating a good draught for the fire.

It was a marquee of this type that Anthony Hendry entered. It was large enough to seat fifty persons comfortably, and the Great Chief received him seated on a white buffalo skin and attended by twenty elders. The Chief signed to Hendry to be seated, then the calumet was produced and passed round in complete silence. Next, willow baskets full of boiled buffalo tongue were passed among the guests. Afterwards Anthony Hendry explained the object of his visit, speaking through an interpreter. He told of his great White Chief living on the shores of the distant Atlantic Ocean who had sent him to visit the Blackfoot people, and to make friends. He invited the Chief to send his young men down to Hudson's Bay to smoke and feast with the white father, and to exchange their furs and hides for rifles, tobacco, blankets, ammunition, mirrors, beads, coloured cloth and trinkets.

The Chief listened in silence, while he watched the swift movements of the interpreter as with incredible speed he retold the story in signs. At last he spoke. His young men, he said, were horsemen, and were not used to canoes or boats. They were eaters of meat and had no liking for fish. "Besides," said the Chief, "we have no need of the white man's goods. On these plains we never want for food or clothing. We follow the buffalo from place to place, and everything

we require to live in comfort and contentment we can procure from the buffalo. We need no rifles, the bow and arrow is all we require." He had been told, he said, that the Indians who journeyed to the white man's trading posts often starved on the way.

"Such remarks," Hendry says, "I thought exceeding true."

An exchange of gifts was made and then Hendry left the lodge. Outside, he noticed the magnificent horses of the Blackfoot, many of them tethered with long thongs of buffalo hide. "They were fine tractable animals," Hendry says, "about 14 hands high, and had halters, saddles and stirrups made of buffalo skins."

Hendry spent the winter of 1754-1755 in the Blackfoot country and in the spring travelled north to the Saskatchewan, where canoes were built and the party returned to York Factory.

A more intimate glimpse of Blackfoot life and customs is included in the diary of Alexander Henry, Jr., who spent the years from 1799-1814 in the North West as an employee of the North-West Fur Company.

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"The ordinary dress of these people is plain and simple—plain leather shoes, leather leggings reaching to the hip and a robe over all constitutes their usual summer dress. Their winter dress differs very little from that of summer; their shoes are then made of buffalo hide dressed in the hair, and sometimes a leather shirt is worn, and a strip of buffalo or

wolf-skin is tied round the head. They never wear mittens. I have frequently seen them come into our houses after a ten or fifteen days' march over the plains in the depth of winter, with the thermometer 30 or 40 degrees below zero, dressed with only shoes, leggings and a robe. Some of the Blackfoot have 40 or 50 horses, but the Piegans have by far the greatest number: I heard of one man who had 3,000. These animals are got from enemies southward, where they are perpetually at war with the Snakes, Flathead, and other nations who have vast herds. A common horse can be bought here for a carrot of tobacco, which weighs about three pounds and costs in Canada four shillings. They are great warriors, and so easily prey upon their enemies that many of the old men have killed with their own hands, during their younger days, 15 or 20 men."

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CHAPTER III

HOW THE BLACKFOOT LIVED

IN George Bird Grinnell's book *Blackfoot Lodge Tales* we find an attractive picture of life in a Blackfoot village half a century ago.

"The sun is just rising. Thin columns of smoke are creeping from the smoke holes of the lodges, and ascending in the still morning air. Everywhere the women are busy, carrying water and wood, and preparing the simple meal. And now we see the men come out and start for the river. Some are followed by their children; some are carrying those too small to walk. They have reached the water's edge. Off drop their blankets, and with a plunge and a shivering 'Ahhohah' they dash into the icy water. Winter and summer, storm or shine, this was their daily custom. They said it made them tough and healthy, and enabled them to endure the bitter cold while hunting on the bare, bleak prairie. By the time they have returned to the lodges, the women have prepared the early meal. A dish of boiled meat—some three or four pounds—is set before each man; the women are served as much as they can eat and the

children take the rest. The horses are now seen coming in, hundreds and thousands of them, driven by boys and young men who started out after them at daylight.

“If buffalo are close at hand, and it has been decided to make a run, each hunter catches his favourite buffalo horse and they all start together; they are followed by the women, on *travois* or horse-back, who will do most of the butchering and transport the meat and hides to camp.

“If there is no large herd of buffalo nearby, they go off, singly or by twos and threes, to still-hunt scattering buffalo, or deer, or elk, or such other game as may be found.

“The women remaining in camp are not idle. All day long they tan robes, dry meat, sew moccasins, and perform a thousand and one other tasks. The young men who have stayed at home carefully braid their hair, paint their faces, and if the weather is fine ride or walk around the camp so that the young women may look at them and see how pretty they are.

“Feasting began early in the morning, and was carried on far into the night. A man who gives a feast has his wife cook the choicest food they have, and when all is ready, he goes outside the lodge and shouts the invitations, calling out each guest's name three times, saying that he is invited to eat, and concludes

by announcing that a certain number of pipes will be smoked.

"The guests having assembled, each one is served with a dish of food. Be the quantity large or small it is all that he will get. If he does not eat it all he may carry home what remains. The host does not eat with his guests. He cuts up some tobacco, and carefully mixes it with herbs, and when all have finished eating he fills and lights a pipe, which is smoked and passed from one to another, beginning with the first man on his left. The guests do not all talk at once. When a person begins to speak, he expects everyone to listen and is never interrupted. When the last pipe-full of tobacco has been smoked the host knocks out the ashes and says 'Kyi', whereupon all the guests rise and file out.

"In a Blackfoot camp the boys were allowed plenty of time for play, and their games were mostly mimic warfare, making images, hunting, and in the summer, hours were spent in the water. It was not so with the girls. Their duties began at an early age, and they were expected to carry wood and water for their mothers, sew moccasins, tan robes and furs, make lodges, scrape hides, lead *travois*, and perform all the usual women's duties in an Indian camp.

"Shortly after noon, the buffalo hunters began to return and immediately the whole camp became alive with excitement. Invita-

tions to feasts were shouted out and everywhere there was laughter, singing, dancing and the sound of drums."

At night came the time for story-telling, and the wonderful works of the gods were related; these were mystery stories that were never told in the day-time. But when darkness came down upon a Blackfoot camp, all the fires were lighted, the women dropped their work, the children gathered around and the old men told miraculous stories of the ancient gods. At night too, around the lodge fires the young men gathered to gamble; the game played appears to have been the same among all the Plains tribes. In a previous chapter we gave Father Lacombe's story of the Indian love for games of chance. In Grinnell's book, *Blackfoot Lodge Tales*, we find a very clear description of the way in which the game of the Elk's tooth was played. A somewhat similar description is found in David Thompson's narrative.

"Two small, oblong bones were used, one of which had a black ring around it. Those who participated in this game, numbering from two to a dozen, were divided into two equal parties ranged on either side of the lodge. Wagers were made, each person betting with the one directly opposite him. Then a man took the bones, and, by skilfully moving his hands and changing the objects from one to the other, sought to make it impossible for the person opposite him to decide which

hand held the marked one. Ten points were the game, counted by sticks, and the side which first got the number took the stakes. A song always accompanied this game, a weird, unearthly air—at first scarcely an audible murmur, it gradually increased in volume and reached a very high pitch, sank quickly to a low bass sound, rose and fell, and gradually died away, to be again repeated.

“The person concealing the bones swayed his body, arms and hands in time to the air, and went through all manner of forceful and intricate movements for the purpose of confusing the guesser. The stakes were sometimes very high, two or three horses or more, and men have been known to lose everything they possessed, even to their clothing.”

There were various ways of teaching and training children. Men would frequently make long speeches, just as they do today at school closing exercises, telling the boys and girls what they must do to be successful in life. They would be told to be brave in war; that long life was a bad thing because old men and women had a hard time; they were neglected, and often cold, sightless, toothless and generally miserable. It was much better to die fighting bravely with a strong body than to waste in old age. Stories of the great men of the tribe and their stirring deeds were told over and over again in order that the youths might be inspired to emulate their ancestors.

Many stories are told of the Indians' search for the medicine or special charm to which he attributed later all the great achievements and deliverances of his life. The young man who went off into the hills to fast and pray for power was obliged to abstain from all food or drink for four days and four nights, during which time he must lie for two nights on the right side and two nights on the left. Mountain peaks, dangerous cliffs, an island in some distant lake, or places where the dead had been buried, any spot that was isolated, dangerous and difficult to reach might be chosen. Sometimes a man would lie down in a well-worn buffalo trail, or he might choose a place where bears were numerous. Having chosen his place of prayer and fasting the warrior built himself a small lodge of brush, and after making his prayers to the sun and singing his sacred songs, he crept into his hut and began his fast. He was not allowed any covering for himself, nor could he use skins for his shelter. By his side he placed a well-filled pipe, so that when the spirit came to visit him it could smoke. Then at the end of the fourth day, the secret helper would come, usually in the form of an animal, and in a dream the fasting warrior would hear his good spirit telling him the way to power, and giving him the secret of his success in life.

CHAPTER IV

THE SIGN LANGUAGE: SIGNAL SYSTEM

HOW did it happen that Anthony Hendry, the first white man to visit the Blackfoot and whose escort was made up of Crees and Assiniboines, was nevertheless able to carry on an intelligent conversation through his interpreters with the chief of the Blackfoot by whom he was first entertained? The answer to that question is that there was a sign language in common use among the Indians of the North American plains which all could use and understand. This sign language was practised by the Plains tribes to such an extent that they were more rapid in discussion by sign language than by the spoken word. Even today, on the Reserves, the old men and women will express an opinion or make a statement with a few rapid movements of the hands, which in speech would require minutes. Not only was this sign language of basic importance in communicating with strangers, but it was used in hunting and warfare, when quiet was necessary in stalking game or an enemy. On the plains one can see much farther than one can hear, and the necessity of communicating with each other at too great a distance for hearing still further emphasized the need of complete understanding of signs.

The system of signs used by the Plains Indians must have had much in common with that in use among deaf-mutes. Professor Webb of the University of Texas, in his book *The Great West*, tells of an experiment carried out several years ago at the Texas school for the deaf. Two Kiowa Indians visited the Institution and one of them, "Woman Heart", told the story of a buffalo hunt in the sign language in common use. Though none of the deaf-mutes had ever seen an Indian talk in signs before, they all understood the story perfectly.

There is this difference, however, that Indian signs were always made in such a way as to be understood at a distance; the gestures accompanying each sign were wide and sweeping. Whereas in the deaf-mutes' language, signs are made close to the body, and are given with the fingers.

Closely related to the sign language was the signal system used by the Indians of the Plains. Smoke signals were used by native tribes in every part of Canada, but, in addition, the red men of the plains used blankets, horses, and small mirrors. An Indian scout perched on a distant hill could, by manoeuvring his horse, give his party information as to the proximity of game, and the presence, number and direction of the enemy, and could say what he thought should be done in the emergency. And it was always customary for a war-party returning from a raid upon a distant enemy to inform the home camp at a distance of several

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miles of the outcome of the expedition, whether they had been successful or defeated, and how many were dead and wounded.

The wonderful thing about the Indian signal system was the amazing distance at which it could be read by an Indian. Very often even with good field glasses a white man would be scarcely able to make out that the tiny speck on the horizon was a horseman, but the Indian guide by his side could tell exactly what that distant speck was saying.

Everyone is familiar with the old-time movie in which a beleaguered little group of white men and women were shown, with covered waggons drawn up in a circle, while a mad *mêlée* of apparently disorganized Indians on horseback rode circling about them. But they were not without plan or discipline as would appear from the picture. One of the most experienced students of the Indian signal system was Colonel Dodge of the American Army.

"A whole band of Indians," he says, "are preparing to attack an enemy position. Suddenly they change, apparently without order, and making such a hullabaloo that no commander or chief could give directions. Yet a signal is given by the leader that every warrior and apparently every horse understands, for you suddenly see the squadron break into sections, one portion dashing off to attack on a flank. Circles form, and circles within circles, in an endless chain of flying horsemen

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COLLEGE SAINT-JEAN
EDMONTON ALBERTA

pouring arrows and bullets upon the enemy. These battle-signals no white man could see or understand, but they were sufficiently clear-cut to command a mounted troop of three or four hundred Indians.

"Once," he goes on to say, "I watched a Sioux Chieftain standing on a knoll overlooking a valley drill 100 mounted warriors by means of a piece of looking-glass held in the hollow of his hand and used to reflect the sun's rays. For more than half an hour he commanded a drill which for variety and promptness of action could not be equalled by any cavalry in the world. All I could see was an occasional movement of the right arm!"

The signal system of the Plains Indian horsemen was never fully divulged to the white man, although references are made to it in many books about Indian customs. Even those whites who married Indian women and lived with the tribes were not admitted to the mystery. Dr. Albert James Myer of the American army is said to have made as close a study as it was possible for a white man to do, of the Indian signal drill, and from his studies he evolved the flag system of signals used by the American army and later by the Boy Scouts.

In fact, the statement has been made that the flag system adopted by the American army during the Civil War had its origin on the western plains of the United States, where it had been in use for fifteen years by American soldiers.

CHAPTER V

HORSEMANSHIP

AS we have already seen, by the time the first white man came to Alberta the Black-foot Indians were well supplied with horses. In fact they counted their wealth in horses, paid their debts in horses and bought their wives with horses; and polygamy being a universal practice among Western Indians, the number of wives in a chief's household often depended upon his capacity as a horse-thief. One of the early missionaries of Alberta, Rev. Dr. McLean, who was stationed for several years at McLeod, once asked a Piegan chief how many wives he had. "Eight wives," he said, "and forty-three children." "How did you get your wives?" asked the missionary.

"Well, I got the first one for a horse. She was not very good-looking so I got her for one horse. The second was good-looking and a good cook, so I had to pay three horses for her. The third one was a beauty, a good cook, and had a fine disposition. I gave six horses and a saddle and a gun for her." Dr. McLean, who tells the story, had his own wife with him at the time, and the Chief said, "How many horses did you pay for *your* wife?"

Dr. McLean then explained the white man's marriage customs, and went on to say that when a white man married the bride's parents equipped her with blankets, pillows and household equipment. The Chief roared with laughter and said, "Oh, they have to pay you to take her away!"

The Blackfoot had a horse for every purpose; the buffalo horse was as swift, intelligent and skilful as a well-trained cow-pony. He had to be alert, incredibly quick in changing direction, willing to follow the game anywhere and press close to the side of the running animal. He must be able by a kind of unerring instinct to know what the buffalo intended to do, and to swerve and turn like lightning with no other guidance than a slight pressure from the knee of his rider.

The war horse was heavier and of greater endurance than the buffalo runner and in going to war the Blackfoot took two or more horses, always saving his swiftest and strongest horse till the last so that either in pursuit of the enemy or in retreat he would be well mounted.

Amongst the feats of riding that have been celebrated by many painters of Indian life, was the trick of dropping the body on the side of the horse away from the enemy. The Blackfoot horseman would dash upon his enemy at full speed, then he would flatten out in a horizontal position, with only one heel showing above his horse's back, and in that position he shot his

arrows from under his horse's neck with such precision, force and speed that he could shoot a dozen arrows while a white man recharged his muzzle-loading rifle.

Many of the Blackfoot warriors had from fifty to one hundred horses, and since it has been estimated that at one time they numbered all told close to 40,000 people, the confederacy must have owned a very large number of animals.

On certain moral questions, such as the violation of the home, responsibility for aged or sick dependents and for widows and children, the Blackfoot law was rigidly observed. In the matter of horse stealing, however, their code was very different from ours; there was no law against it, and it was a matter of great pride to be a skilful and successful horse-thief. One trader states in his journal: "I have seen a Blackfoot crawl into a bivouac where a dozen men were asleep, each with his horse tied to his wrist by a lariat—cut a rope within six feet of the sleeper's head and get away with a horse without waking a soul." In fact, one old chief boasted to a trader that his son could steal more horses than any young man in the tribe. The Indian's weapons were made especially with the view to being used on horseback. The warrior's chief weapon before rifles came into common use was a small bow not over three feet long. It was usually made from ash or dried poplar, and sometimes was reinforced with buffalo sinew. The arrows were tipped

with points of bone, flint or steel. In the arrows used for buffalo, the barbs were usually fixed to the shaft and the arrows were withdrawn after the kill, cleaned with grass and replaced in the quiver. Many warriors, however, specialized in a detachable barb for use against an enemy, so that the shaft could be withdrawn, leaving the barb in the wound. The quiver in which the arrows were carried was suspended from the shoulder in such a way that the hand that pulled the bow-string could grasp and place them in one swift movement. In battle the Plains Indians wore a shield made of buffalo hide, smoked and hardened with glue made from buffalo hoofs. This shield was so tough that it would deflect an arrow or bullet, unless it received a direct hit at right angles. Not only did the Plains Indian protect himself in this way, but as we have seen he could use his horse as a shield. "Armed and mounted in this way he was a most dangerous opponent, for he could carry as many as one hundred arrows and shoot them from a horse running at full speed with such rapidity that he could keep two arrows in the air all the time, and could shoot with such force that he could drive an arrow right through the body of a buffalo."*

In Catlin's book, *The North American Indian*, he tells of seeing the Mandan Indians playing what was called "the game of the arrow". The trick was to see how many arrows could be kept in the air at once. The contestant held eight or

*Webb, *The Great West*.

ten arrows in his left hand, shooting them from the bow with his right, and many would have eight arrows in the air at once.

Apart from the buffalo hunt and games of chance, the chief occupation of the male Blackfoot was war, and within a few years after they first began to use the horse and realize its value, groups of Blood, Piegans, and Blackfoot were raiding tribes as far south as New Mexico, and bringing back with them the spoils of victory in the shape of scalps, steel weapons and large numbers of horses. In J. W. Shultze's well-known book *Rising Wolf*, which contains the story of Hugh Munro's expedition to the Missouri plains, the Chief of the expedition, Lone Walker, showed young Munro a coat of mail and a long sword on which was inscribed the name of Francesco Alvarez, Barcelona, Spain, 1693, and told him he had, when a young man, travelled far south to the "always-summer-land" and in a desperate encounter with Spaniards had killed the man who wore the shirt of mail and carried the long sword. It was in the year 1816 that Lone Walker related the above incident, which would appear to indicate that for many years before that time the Blackfoot were familiar with the country of the far southern states. That they had travelled a great distance southward is shown by the fact that Lone Walker, in indicating the length of time required for the journey, stated that he and his party had left Bow Fort, on the Bow River west of Calgary, when the grass first

came in the spring, and counting the moons arrived in the "always-summer-land" in the first moon of winter.

CHAPTER VI

BLACKFOOT SERVICE CLUBS

AS we have already stated the Blackfoot confederacy was made up of Piegans, Bloods, the Blackfoot proper, and their allies the "Gros Ventres" or "Big Bellies", so named because of their enormous appetites. Each one of these tribes had numerous war clubs or secret societies. In the Blackfoot organization there were twelve of these societies, each one with specific membership rules, and the members were very carefully chosen. The best known societies were the "Bulls", the "Horns", the "Crazy-Dogs", "Little Birds", the "Braves" and "Kit-Foxes". Each club had its own songs and dances and its own customs and ceremonial rites. To become a member of one of these bands, the young man had to be of proved bravery; he must have a good heart, honest and straightforward tongue and be of a generous nature.

The invitation to join one of the young men's societies such as the "Braves" was extended by the leader of the club after its members had observed closely the boy's conduct in battle, and his disposition as a member of the tribe. Before the young warrior could become a fully adopted member of one of the "All-Friend-So-

cieties" it was customary for him to seek out some remote and dangerous spot and there obtain through long exposure and fasting, the "sacred helper" he must carry as his talisman throughout his life. Once an accepted and pledged member of a society the young man was regarded with great respect, and when he was not away on an expedition of war spent his time about camp in gambling and self-adornment.

"Such a young dandy was often exempt from hunting and herding horses, he rose late in the morning, went to the river to bathe, and after the morning meal which was prepared by his mother, he carefully combed and braided his long hair, put on clean shirts, leggings, and beautifully embroidered moccasins, then with bow and arrow-case slung over one shoulder, shield suspended from the left elbow, and a small looking glass in a wooden frame dangling from his right wrist, he would walk up and down to be admired by the women, or stand for hours like a statue outside his lodge."*

Then before starting upon a dangerous war-raid the leader and the members of his society observed a kind of good-luck ceremony known as the sweat bath. Occasionally in Alberta even yet the farmer or homesteader finds in his fields, beside a running stream or lake, a round circle of stones deeply imbedded in the soil as

*J. W. Shultze, *The Sun God's Children*.

though placed there centuries ago by man's hands. Many of these mark the spot where a sweat lodge had been built years ago by the Indians. A circle of stones and willows bent over formed a cabin-like structure near the edge of a lake. This was covered with buffalo hides, and inside the entrance a large hole was filled with white-hot rocks from a fire close at hand. The warrior entered the sweat lodge naked, water was handed in to him in leather buckets which he poured on the simmering, hot rocks. Clouds of steam arose as successive buckets of cold water were poured out, until the young man, almost overcome with the heat, and dripping with sweat, burst from the lodge and plunged into the lake.

One of the most cruel of the ordeals to which the young candidates were subjected was known as the sun-dance. Descriptions of this orgy, which was stopped by the N.W.M.P. after their arrival in 1874, are found in many journals and traders' notes.

It usually took place in a canyon, or a natural amphitheatre such as an enclosed valley. In the centre of the enclosure stood a tall pole, from which were suspended raw-hide ropes corresponding to the number of young men who were to be initiated—possibly ten or twelve or even more. The young man took his stand beside one of these ropes, which was then attached to a skewer which was passed through the fleshy part of the breasts. He was then expected to dance at full speed around the pole

until he fainted from exhaustion, or the flesh gave way and set him free. As long as the dance continued the young man was expected to shout and sing, while his admiring relatives watched from the side and beat war-drums to stir his spirit. Often it was hours before the struggling victim succeeded in tearing himself free, and during that time he was expected to show no sign of pain.

Another method described by many writers, was to cut slits in the young warrior's back through which a raw-hide rope was passed under the muscles. Then buffalo heads were attached to these ropes just clear of the ground, and the candidate was expected to dance until the weight of the head and his own exertions would tear the flesh and set him free. If he fainted or faltered, very often his mother, fearing the contempt of the tribe, would rush out and seizing the buffalo head would drag the boy until he was free and made a brave.

CHAPTER VII

THE STORY OF "WEASEL TAIL"

THE following story was told several years ago to J. W. Schultze by A'puksoyis or "Weasel Tail", a member of the Blood Indian tribe of the Blackfoot Confederacy, who is now over 75 years of age.

"Weasel Tail" is a member of the "Horns Society" and always takes a prominent part in the ceremonies of Okan or Sun's Lodge, which his tribe builds annually in honour of the great and powerful God of light.

It was when the tribe was camped at Waterton Lake several years ago after ten days of ceremonial observances that "Weasel Tail" told the story of his life. It is given here to illustrate one of the points mentioned in an earlier chapter, namely, that the chief occupation of the Blackfoot in the early days was that of war.*

"In the summer following my eighth winter, my tribe traded their furs and buffalo robes to the Hudson's Bay Company, at its post on Bow River, and then moved down that stream to camp, and kill buffalo for food and leather for new lodges. There one of the men, Crow Eagle, became dissatisfied with the hunting, and said that he was going with his family where game would be more plenti-

**The Sun God's Children*, J. W. Schultze.

ful. Our head chief, Bull Necklace, strongly advised him to remain where he was; to go off by himself, he said, would be very dangerous, as enemy war parties were everywhere abroad. But Crow Eagle would not listen to the chief; he said that he was well able to care for his family, and with his three wives and eight children he went south and camped on the Rope-Stretched-Across-Creek (Lee's Creek), in the midst of vast herds of buffalo.

"Came a day when Crow Eagle did not go hunting until late in the afternoon, and then, on his way home, he frightened a herd of buffalo in which he saw a sacred white one, a yearling. It was then nearly night; the horse he rode was slow, so he went on home with the meat that he had, and early the next morning mounted his fast buffalo runner and went in search of the white one. He rode about all day long but did not find the animal, and night came before he neared his camp. From the rim of the valley he looked down upon it, and at once knew that something was wrong, for he could see no red glow of his lodge. He hurried down and found only the bare poles of it: the lodge skin was gone, and all that it had contained, and lying here and there near it were his three women and six of his children; dead, all of them, and stripped of their necklaces, bracelets and rings. In his grief he wept loudly, naming them one by one, and from

the near brush a seventh child, a little girl, came limping, and told him that she came from her elder sister, very badly wounded. He asked who had done the killing of his loved ones, and she replied that a war party of River People (Pend d'Oreilles) were the murderers. He hurried to the other surviving little girl, and found her very badly wounded. As quickly as he could, he laid the dead side by side, covered them with brush and stones as best he could, attached a *travois* to his horse, set the two girls upon it, and started for our camp on Bow River.

"I saw Crow Eagle coming into our camp with the surviving two of his family, and, with many others, I hurried to meet them. We surrounded them, and even as he was crying and telling us of his loss, one of the little girls, gasping for breath, dropped from the *travois* and died as she struck the ground. And at that I cried: cried and cried. And there and then, before that crowd of our people, I called upon Sun to hear me: I vowed that I would avenge the death of that poor little girl; that I would make the River People cry for what they had done to her. I was then but eight winters of age.

"Winters and summers came and went, and I did not forget my vow. In the summer after my seventeenth winter, when we were encamped right here at this lake, I went up onto this mountain, this one which we have since named in honour of our one-time great

warrior, Pinukwiin (Far-Off in Sight), and there fasted and prayed for a vision. On the fourth night of my fast my prayers were answered. Appeared to me, to my shadow, as it seemed, I was wandering along a river, a water animal—an otter—and told me that it would be my sacred and powerful helper, and advised me all that I must do always to retain its favour. So was it that before winter came I was enabled to join the Little Birds Band of the All Friends Society, and became therefore eligible to join a party going against our enemies.

“But I was to fulfil my vow before going upon a war trail. Early in the next, my eighteenth summer, we made camp on Old Man’s River near where Fort Macleod now stands, and from there one day my friend Fox Head and I went to hunt waving tails (whitetail deer) in the timbered bottoms of We-Fought-the-Kutenais River (Waterton River). On this river, long before my time, my tribe had a battle with a large war party of the Kutenai tribe, and killed many of them; hence its name.

“My friend and I rode through two timbered points without success, and were crossing a grassy ridge to hunt in the next grove above, when just as we neared the top of the ridge a lone enemy suddenly appeared, riding down at us from the top, shouting his war cry, and saying in our own language: ‘Nistoa Nietuktai Tupikwan. Kitaks inita!’ (I am a

River People man. I shall kill you.) He fired at us and killed my friend's horse, then turned and rode off the way he had come, I after him on my good horse. I followed him a long way, slowly gaining upon him. He fired back at me several times, but my sacred animal helper turned aside his bullets. He saw then that I had powerful medicine; that his bullets could not harm me. He began to shout back to me to pity him. I did not reply. When I thought that I was near enough to him to surely hit him, I fired; my bullet struck him in the back of his neck; he was dead when he struck the ground. I took his scalp, his blanket and gun, his horse, and two eagle-tail feathered bands that he had worn upon his head. So did I fulfil the vow that I had made in my eighth summer; so I avenge the death of that one for whom I had cried, that little daughter of Crow Eagle.

"One summer, when we Blood People were encamped on Belly River, Pikú'ni friends of mine, Bird Rattle, Short Man and Lone Rider came from the south to visit me, and after a time we decided to go to war. As my woman, as usual, accompanied me, we were a party of five.

"We were quite tired when we arrived at Aiya Ki'mikwi (Hills-on-Both-Sides; Cypress Hills) early one morning, so we rested there that day and all the following night. During the night I had a strange vision: came to me a very old man, and said: 'You are to see a

coyote. Watch the animal, notice the direction that his nose is pointing, and go you that way and you will find horses.' Having said that, the old man vanished.

"When we awoke in the morning I told my companions of my vision, and they thought, as I did, that it was without value. But while we were eating some meat that we had broiled, a coyote appeared upon a rise of ground quite near us, and looking straight to the south, never once at us, it raised its quavering yelp. Four times it did that—four, the sacred number—and then trotted off southward and out of our sight. And said Bird Rattle to me: 'I was mistaken about your vision. It meant something of value to us. Your vision animal looked straight to the south all the time it was near us. So is it that we must go south instead of east-and-south to Little River, as we intended.'

"We were all agreed that this was the thing for us to do. My woman asked: 'Do we remain here until night, and then go on?' We were afoot, and so travelling only in the night-time, for it was very dangerous for small parties afoot to travel in the daytime, likely as they would be to be discovered by a large party of enemies travelling through the country.

" 'I think that we should go on as soon as we finish eating,' I replied.

" 'No. Too dangerous,' said my woman.

" 'Not so. His vision was that we are to

find horses by going in the direction to which the coyote's nose pointed; therefore it must be that by the vision Old Man meant for us to travel in daytime; for, were we to travel only at night, we could not see horses unless we should happen to walk right to them.'

"That was the opinion of the others of the party. We finished eating, took up our weapons and other belongings and went on south across the plain, and in the middle of the day discovered five horses a little way ahead of us. But they were wild horses; no sooner did they see us than they raised their tails and ran, never stopped running so long as they were in sight. We wondered if they were the horses of my vision.

"We went on and on, and near night discovered a few riders well to the south of us and going south down the valley of Little River, in which was probably their camp. When night came we went on, and upon arriving at the rim of the river valley looked down upon a camp of more than a hundred lodges; lodges of our enemy, the Assiniboinés, right there in our own country. Well they knew that our Blood tribe and the Blackfoot were far to the north, and the Pikú'ni far west at the foot of the Backbone (the Rocky Mountains), or they would never have dared to camp where they were.

"And now was my vision truly fulfilled, for down in the valley were many bands of horses; hundreds and hundreds of horses;

some of them well out from the camp and quite near us. We went down among them, and with the ropes that we carried caught each of us one, and I another one for my woman. We mounted them and surrounded and drove off northward a fine band of the animals, and without alarming their owners. We were happy. As soon as we were well out upon the plain we sang song after song; victory songs; songs of war. It was a night when Old Woman (the moon) was showing all of herself above us in the blue. So was it that we were enabled to count our takings; including those that we rode, they were forty-four big strong horses.

"At midnight we turned west, again struck Little River, then turned up it northward again, or somewhat west of north, and at daylight, being very tired, we stopped to rest at the foot of a very steep little butte not far east of the East Butte of the Sweetgrass Three Buttes. Haiya! Just as my woman was starting a fire of some dry willows that she had gathered, there came charging at us a large party of Cree riders, some of them coming down the valley, the others up it. We were surrounded. We could not possibly mount our horses and escape from them. There was but one thing for us to do, and we did it: we ran to the top of the steep butte, threw up a circle of the large rocks that were there plentiful, and lay down within it.

"Shouting their weak Cree war cry, the

enemy came charging up that steep hill, thinking to overcome us easily. We fired at them with careful aim, wounded one of them and killed two of the horses that they rode. Back down the hill they went, faster than they had come up it. We expected them to come again, and when they showed no intention to do so, I went out to where I could look down upon them and dared them to come and try to kill us. They did not answer me; they did not even fire at me: they rounded up the horses that we had taken and drove them off north-east. We were again afoot.

"Said my woman to me: 'Just nothing, that vision of yours. What good did it do us? None.'

"Said Bird Rattle to her: 'Woman, be careful. It is not safe to speak ill of our visions. You may bring great trouble upon us by doing so. So far as your man's vision went it was good. As it foretold we did find horses, we captured horses. That, doubtless, was as far as the old man of the vision had knowledge of the future. He could not have known that the horses would be taken from us.'

"'All I will say, then, is that we are again afoot and I think that we should go home,' she answered.

"'I am not going home,' I said. 'I started out to get the enemy horses and I am going to have them. From here I am going to our friends, the Entrails People (Gros Ventres), for a short visit with them, and then on to

raid the Sioux or some other enemy.'

"Arriving at Big River (the Missouri River), we made a raft of driftwood and safely crossed it, and in the timber on the south side I shot a buffalo and wounded another with my bow and arrows, which I always carried in order to get meat without noise. Leaving my woman and Lone Rider to take the tongue and a little of the meat of my kill, I went on after the wounded one, and just as I killed it my woman overtook me and said that she had seen a man up on the rim of the valley. I looked up at it from the edge of the grove. It was strewn with huge rocks, sparsely grown with small pines. I could see no man, and told her that she must have mistaken one of the pines for a man, but she insisted that she had seen a man there, walking, with a gun upon his shoulder. In the shelter of a deep and narrow coulée, and the thick brush of the slope, I went up to the rim, my woman following, and hearing some one coming our way singing a low, strange song, we crouched down in the shelter of a big rock surrounded with thick juniper brush. The man came on, still singing his low song; a Crow he was, and was passing close in front of us, when with my loud, like-a-mad-grizzly-bear roaring, I sprang out at him frightening him so badly that he dropped his gun; and seeing me with my rifle pointed at him, he dared not pick it up or run. Instead, he held his hands out toward me, and,

crying, signed to me to pity him. Yes, he bellowed shrilly; tears rolled down his cheeks. My woman said to me: 'Move over! Let me kill him!' She cocked her six-shooter and started to aim it at him; but I felt sudden and great pity for the man because he was crying. I told her that she should not kill him; told the man, signed to him, that I gave him his life. I took up his rifle. Lone Rider joined us and I talked with my captive, in the sign language of course. He said that he was a Crow—as I well knew by the way his hair was dressed. He had lost his woman. When she died he had felt so badly that he had left his people and was just wandering about by himself and mourning for her. He was now thinking that he would go on down the river and visit the Entrails People of the Earth Houses, some of whom were his relatives. I handed him his rifle and told him to go. He turned and left us, went down the slope of the valley, never once looking back at us. Then my woman and Lone Rider scolded me; said that I should not have given the man, a Crow, one of our worst enemies, his life. I told them that I had so pitied him that I could not kill him. I raised my hands to Sun and asked him to pity me; to give me success in my undertakings; to be good to me even as I had pitied this my enemy and given him his life.

"Here is a strange happening. Three summers back, when I was visiting the Pikú'ni,

this Crow came from his Bighorn River country, came in the fire waggons, also to visit them, and we met, recognized one another though we were now both of us old and wrinkled and grayhaired. His name was Bear Snake. Said he: 'Sun heard you, yes. Above One heard you when you had pity for me and has let us meet. Yes, here we are together, talking to one another. It is good.'

"Travelling by night, well cached and resting by day, we three at last crossed Elk River, ascended Bighorn River, and at daylight one morning, looked down upon a big camp of the Crows and their many bands of horses grazing around it. We hid in the thick growth of cherry brush on a slope of the valley, slept by turns, ate some dried meat that we had, watched the Crows go out to hunt, and saw them return, their horses loaded with buffalo meat. Came night, and we went down into the valley, approaching the camp, sat down near it until the singing, dancing, visiting, and feasting of the people ceased and they slept.

"Lone Rider and I went into the Camp and led out horses that were tied close to their owners, their war horses, their fast buffalo horses, and brought them to my woman to hold while we went in for more of them. It is very dangerous, that taking of horses out of an enemy camp. Each time we went in for them, we went well knowing that we might not come out alive. At any time we

were likely to be discovered and shot down. The second time we went in, as we were approaching a lodge to which two big gray horses were tied, their ropes secured to the pegs of the lodge skin, we heard a deep, heavy cough within it, and stopped and lay down flat at the edge of a not high growth of sagebrush. And just in time, for a man came out of the lodge, stood staring this way and that way, went to the two horses, examined their ropes, and then went back into the lodge. We lay right where we were for some time, then went to another part of the camp; heard heavy snoring in a lodge near which three horses were tied; we took them. Five times we entered the camp and took out altogether fourteen horses. Then mounting three of them we started down the valley, I in the lead, my woman and Lone Rider driving the loose horses close after me. We went slowly until out of sight and hearing of the camp, then swiftly, as fast as we possibly could, and at daybreak came to Elk River (the Yellowstone) and without trouble swam it with our takings. We went on and on all that long day, with but one short rest. No doubt the Crows found and took our trail, but we had the best of them: frequent changes of horses. So was it that we never saw them. Some days later, we rode into the camp of our people, on Belly River, singing a victory song. So ended that raid against the enemy."

CHAPTER VIII

THE PLACE OF WOMEN—THE EDMONTON MASSACRE—THE SMALLPOX EPIDEMIC OF 1870

AMONG the Plains Indians, woman had little prestige. It was her duty to bear children, to raise them, and to make herself the general servant of the whole family. Upon her overburdened shoulders devolved all the unpleasant tasks and all the routine chores that are inevitable in a constantly moving household, with a troop of young children. In addition, her husband, often brutal, frequently heaped upon her unwarranted abuses. Far from indulging in self-pity, the Indian woman was so accustomed to suffering that she forced herself to submit to indignity and misfortune in complete silence. When the children grew up the mother was often forgotten, the young men despising her as an old woman. As Father Lacombe said: "What would you? She is a woman—she is called Is-kew—that which walks behind."

When the missionaries began to preach the gospel among the natives, the men were indignant; they could not believe their ears when it was suggested that women were to be given the same right and consideration as men. No

woman had ever entered the Red Man's Councils; the idea was ridiculous. One of the immediate benefits of the missionary's work was partially to free these unfortunate women from slavery. Occasionally, however, a woman would appear in a tribe who had no intention of submitting to the insults and indignities of the men. Father Lacombe in his letters tells of such a woman among the Blackfoot.

"It happened in a camp of Blackfoot Indians that a group of 50 young warriors prepared themselves for an expedition of war. Just as they were about to leave camp, the young wife of one of the men came to him and begged him to take her along. She would know how to make herself useful, she said. But her supplications were rewarded only with a smile of contempt by the young husband, who told her to go to her tent.

"The band of warriors then set forth on their journey, leaving the young woman deeply hurt and angry. Suddenly a plan occurred to her which she quickly put into execution. A few hours after the others had gone, she caught up a swift horse and followed, catching up with them the next morning. Once more the young men tried to send her back; she refused to go, and when they moved on she followed with them, till finally with a shrug of his shoulders the young husband said: 'All right, since you insist on making a nuisance of yourself, come along, but

don't blame me if you get badly hurt.' That day they arrived in sight of an enemy's camp. Unfortunately, in spite of all their precautions, they were seen and suddenly found themselves surrounded by double their number of Crow Indians. Most of the young Blackfoot warriors were killed and scalped; some, however, escaped, among them the husband of the disobedient woman. This young man managed to get away and rode at top speed for home. The young woman, however, was taken prisoner, and trembling with rage and fighting like a wild-cat, she was forced to mount behind the handsome young chief of the Crows as his prize. She had to sit on his horse for hours and listen to his songs of victory as he and his companions waved the scalps of her brothers in the air. Suddenly she could stand it no longer, and stooping forward she seized a long cutlass which hung from the young chief's belt, and before anyone realized what was happening, she plunged the sword through his body. Then before the startled warriors could recover from their surprise at what had occurred, she threw the body of the young chief to the ground. After stripping him of all his scalps and war trophies, with a wild shout she sprang into the saddle from which she had thrown her enemy, and disappeared, followed by a shower of arrows and pursued by the angry Crows. But the horse ridden by the young chieftain was the swiftest of all the Crow horses and

she speedily outran her pursuers. Soon she caught up with those young men of her own tribe who had escaped. It was too good an opportunity to miss, and as she rode up beside her astonished husband she said: "I told you so. After this you take me with you when you go to war. You need a woman to protect you from your enemies. Here, take these scalps, you brave men warriors. We will tell the tribe you won them in battle against fearful odds. I am a woman, I need no scalps to prove my bravery. But I shall keep the war-bonnet of the young chief I killed as a souvenir of my victory, and to remind you that I am just as good a warrior as any of you.' "

When the woman told this story to Father Lacombe, she was over 70 years of age, but she had a place of great honour in the camp, and her husband had been made a chief. She attended all the councils of the tribe and gave advice in matters of war.

THE EDMONTON MASSACRE

Many stories have been told of an Indian massacre which took place at Edmonton in 1870. The story of that disaster is included in Father Lacombe's letters and may be of interest here. Father Lacombe says that it took place right across the river from old Fort Edmonton, which probably means straight across from the

Parliament Buildings on the flats. This is the story :

“In the first days of January, 1870, I started up the Saskatchewan River toward Rocky Mountain House to visit a large camp of Blackfoot, who had sent word to me that they wished me to come to them at once. Taking a young Piegan as guide and assistant, I set forth on a difficult journey. It was 45 below zero when we left St. Albert, and before we had gone very far we were battling with a blizzard of snow that almost swept us off our feet. The cold was so intense that we had to stay up all night to keep a fire going to prevent us from freezing to death. We dare not lie down.

“About 50 miles up the river we came upon a small camp of thirty families of Blackfoot Indians. They were in wretched condition, short of food and suffering from severe frost-bites. I stayed a day with them, preached to them and taught and baptized the children. I tried to persuade them to come with me and join their main body of people near Rocky Mountain House, but only a half-dozen families joined us; the others decided to move on down the river to Fort Edmonton.

“After a week or more at Rocky Mountain House we started back down the river for St. Albert. As we were rounding a bend in the river, about 30 miles above Fort Edmonton, I saw coming towards me a little group

of Indians. Soon I could see that it was a party of four men of whom two were badly wounded, and three or four women who were crying piteously. This was all that was left of the band of twenty or more families who had refused to accompany me to Rocky Mountain House. A band of Cree-Assiniboines, hidden by the bank of the river opposite Fort Edmonton, had fallen upon them as they came down the river and had massacred men, women and children without pity. For three days the survivors had wandered about barefoot, with scarcely any clothing and no food. It was a pitiful sight and we were far from assistance, but I bound up the wounded, gave them what little food I had, took off part of my clothing and gave it to the women, and hauling the wounded on our sledges we made our painful way back to St. Albert."

When the Blackfoot heard of this outrage they prepared themselves for a complete revenge. War-drums sounded the rally through the forests from the North Saskatchewan, south to the Bow and Belly Rivers, and as far East as Cypress Hills. All the tribes were gathered together for an attack upon Fort Edmonton. The Blackfoot believed that the white men were in league with the Crees or they would not have allowed this terrible thing to happen. Father Lacombe was about to leave St. Albert on a journey to St. Paul de Métis

when a runner arrived telling him that the whole Blackfoot Confederacy was moving north to attack Fort Edmonton. A few hours later another messenger arrived, and although it was midnight the good priest left at once for Fort Edmonton. Here he found the little population in great commotion. Preparations for the defence of the fort were under way, and Mr. Christie, the Factor, had gathered a band of Crees together and placed them in ambush in the wood along the river. Cannons, ammunition, muskets, all were ready for the expected attack. Meanwhile Mr. Christie, the Factor, ordered everybody to remain in their tents inside the walls of the Fort. At midnight the following day the Blackfoot arrived and hid themselves on the south bank of the river, signalling their intentions by repeated fusillades. Bullets whistled over the tents and cracked against the palisades. Shortly after midnight, Father Lacombe with a party of thirty half-breed hunters took up positions on the galleries and bastions of the Fort to relieve the clerks and traders who had held the positions. It was necessary to watch the darkness with the eyes of a cat for the slightest motion along the river. It is always good Indian tactics to attack shortly after midnight, and as Father Lacombe and his men strained their eyes and ears to catch any movement or sound on the river below, it seemed at any moment the attack would begin and they would all be butchered,

for the Blackfoot outnumbered them four to one.

Then Father Lacombe thought of another plan of defence. For twenty years he had been a father and friend to the Blackfoot; they knew him and loved him. He decided, in spite of Mr. Christie, who ordered him to remain within the walls, to go out into the darkness to find the chief of the Blackfoot to ask him not to attack the Fort, and to explain that he and his white friends had nothing to do with the massacre of their brothers, but were and always had been good friends of all the Red men.

The darkness was so complete that one could scarcely see a foot in advance when the good priest set out upon his dangerous mission, making his way with the silence and skill of an Indian down to the river. Sometimes a twig would break under his foot with a snap like a pistol-shot, and he would stand absolutely rigid for a moment till all was quiet again. At great risk he managed to convince the Blackfoot, from a distance, that they should hear what he had to say. Standing on the river bank in the darkness, Father Lacombe made his speech; the chief said he would think it over, and the priest returned to the Fort.

Meanwhile no one in the Fort knew that Father Lacombe had gone out to visit the Blackfoot chief. At the south-west bastion right alongside the port-hole guarded by Malcolm Groat, there was a young Scotsman by the name of Donald MacDonald who had es-

caped a massacre at Fort Carlton a few months before. He could hear on the night air the shouted conversation between Father Lacombe and the Blackfoot chief, but he was unable to distinguish what they were saying. He felt sure that whoever it was who had been talking down there by the river-bank had meant no good to the people in the Fort. He now saw approaching in the darkness the lone figure of Father Lacombe. He was sure it was a spy, and taking careful aim he waited till the priest should move within range. Just then Malcolm Groat saw what he was about to do and rushed over. He reached MacDonald just as the young man was about to pull the trigger, but Groat threw his arm out and struck the musket, and Father Lacombe's life was saved. "You are the only man in Edmonton who does not know the sound of Father Lacombe's voice. He has been down there risking his own life to try and save ours: put your musket away."

The priest, unconscious of the danger he had just passed, continued around the Fort to see if all was quiet. Then he went to his tent. In the morning the anxious watchers looked across the river only to find that the Blackfoot had struck camp and gone away, and Edmonton was saved.

THE EPIDEMIC OF 1870

In the same year one of the most terrible disasters in the history of Western Canada took place. Father Lacombe had gone to visit his

sister Christine who was teaching school at Lac la Biche. This brave young woman had come from Quebec to assist her brother in teaching the young savages of his flock. While he was there a messenger arrived from Fort Edmonton with a letter bidding him to return at once, that his Indians were dying like flies, and that those who attempted to flee died on the road. Some strange disease had attacked the Indians and was spreading among them like wild-fire. When Father Lacombe arrived at St. Paul de Métis he saw his first case of the epidemic that was sweeping the country; he recognized it at once as small-pox. Hastening to St. Albert, he faced a most pitiful sight; everywhere Indians were dying after a short illness, and all over the country terror stalked among the people. The scourge had already reached Saskatchewan and Manitoba, chiefly among the Crees and the Blackfoot. Without medicines and without knowledge of hygiene the savages were easy victims of the dread disease.

It would be impossible to describe here the progress of the epidemic and the suffering of the people. For six months Father Lacombe lived among his people. He did not visit the forts, but day by day he went from tent to tent caring for the sick, burying the dead, comforting the dying. Hundreds of Indians in their terror plunged into the Saskatchewan and drowned rather than face the disease. Many of the priests were taken down with small-pox,

among them Father Leduc, Father Doucet and Father Blanchet. Rev. George McDougall of the Methodist Church and his associates in the Protestant missions did their best to fight the disease and the panic that spread over the land. Two of George McDougall's children were stricken with the malady.

During the epidemic the daughter of the great sorcerer or medicine man of the Crees was attacked by the disease. Her father adored her, but with all his charms and magic he was helpless. He sent for Father Lacombe. When the priest arrived he saw that the girl was in the last stages of the malady and that nothing could be done, so he administered the last sacraments. Although the father was a pagan and refused to believe in the white man's God, he hoped that Father Lacombe would succeed where he had failed. He cried out to the priest to save his child. The priest told him to cease his tricks and silly superstitions and submit to the will of God. At last the sorcerer gave up his incantations, and throwing himself upon his knees, in a loud voice began to pray. The prayer is given in full in Father Lacombe's letters, a striking example of the eloquence of some of the Indian leaders.

“Oh Great Spirit, thou who dost listen to the buffaloes when they seek the life-giving waters, thou who through the ages hast given to the birds of the air the grain with which to sustain their flight, why wilt thou not

listen to me? Is it that thou lovest better the beasts of the plains than man made in thine own image? We are told that thou had'st a son whom thou lovedst as thyself. And I, have a daughter dearer to me than life. Thou who canst heal her, why dost thou let her die? What good will it do for thee to take my child? Thou hast no need of her, but she is the breath of my body. If thou wilt hear me, and if thou art really the master of life, thou wilt let my daughter live, and I will believe then that thou art good and lovest thy children."

In describing this scene, Father Lacombe wept with emotion, and then said: "It seemed to me that the Eternal Father heard that prayer, and smiling at the wonderful eloquence of that poor savage said: 'I agree with you, your daughter shall live.' And so she did." A week or so later she was completely cured, and Papabkines, the Cree sorcerer was from that time a Christian and a great help to Father Lacombe.

Towards the end of that terrible summer of 1870, the epidemic disappeared, but in the meantime it had claimed nearly 3,000 victims among the Blackfoot and the Crees.

CHAPTER IX

HOW AN INDIAN BOY GOT HIS NAME

IN the white man's world today, names convey no indication of the character or social standing of the individual. Among the red men, however, an Indian's name had a very definite relation to his record as a warrior, or as a horse-thief, or any other qualification he might have. In fact an Indian name gave the world at large a fairly good idea as to whether its owner was a coward, a liar, a thief, or a brave man.

In his book *Long Lance*,* Chief Buffalo Child, the late well-known Indian writer of Alberta, says that every Indian had three names during his life-time. His first name which he received at birth and retained until he was old enough to go on the war-path, was descriptive of some circumstance surrounding his birth: as, for instance, the Blackfoot chief whose first name was "Howling-in-the-middle-of-the-night" because his mother said he used to howl like a coyote all night long. This name the unfortunate youth kept until he was big enough to earn one for himself. The Indian boy's second name was usually given to him by his playmates when he was twelve or thirteen years of age. This name usually stuck to him, whatever his

(Farrar & Rhinehart).

mother might call him, till he became a man. Very often the name given to him by other boys was anything but flattering, and was usually based on some defect, such as Bow Legs, Crazy Dog, Running Nose, Bad Boy, or Wolf Tail. Mr. McDougall tells of an Indian his father knew called "Greasy Belly".

But the Indian's real name was the name he earned for himself on the war-trail. In fact his life-name depended upon the showing he was able to make in his first encounter with an enemy. When he returned from war the whole tribe gathered to witness the ceremony in which he would be given his tribal name by the chief of the tribe. If he had made a good showing he would be given some such name as "Heavy Lance", "Charging Buffalo", "Six-Killer", or "Many Chiefs". But if he made a poor showing his name might be "Crazy Wolf", "Man-afraid-of-a-horse", or "Smoking-old-woman". Thus his name revealed his character.

Some of the famous warriors of the Black-foot had as many as twelve names, each one better than the last, as his prowess in battle became known. These Indian names were sacred possessions of the man to whom they had been given. No one else could use them, nor could the owner give them away to anyone, not even to his own son, unless the chief and the tribe decreed that it should be done to commemorate some great deed. The greatest honour an Indian could have was to inherit his father's

name, an honour which only a few were ever given.

The above are some of the reasons why an old Indian will never tell you his own name, especially if it be a glorious one. If you ask him he will turn to some third person and ask him to tell you. He is supposed to be too modest to brag of his exploits on the field of battle. His names are like decorations or medals that a white man wears on his breast, not to be spoken about. But like the white man, the Indian under the influence of fire-water often sang of his warlike deeds and gloried in them.

As soon as an Indian boy reached the age of fifteen or sixteen he began to long for an opportunity to prove his courage, and it was no uncommon thing for a group of five or six young lads to steal away from camp with whatever weapons they were able to procure and a hunting teepee big enough to cover them at night. The late Chief Buffalo Child tells of an experience with five of his companions who had stolen away from the Blood Indian camp in Southern Alberta. It was their ambition to meet a war-party of their ancient enemies, the Crows, but fortunately for them they met no warriors. One morning, however, while they were cooking some prairie chickens, they heard boys talking a strange language beyond some trees that shielded their camp from the open plains. The boys from the Blood camp grabbed their weapons and sneaked down to the edge of a small creek in the direction from which

they had heard the voices. Presently they saw walking along the other side of the stream six Crow Indian boys, who were picking Saskatoons and putting them into large skin-pails which they carried. While the Blood boys watched the children of their worst enemies, the Crow boys turned and plunging into the river waded across right to the spot where the Blood boys were hidden. As they climbed the bank, suddenly their enemy was upon them with weapons thrust into their faces. Up went their hands, and Saskatoon berries rained from the sky as the frightened Crows threw their arms over their heads in the sign of surrender. Then all at once the Blood Indian boys began to laugh. The humour of the situation seemed to strike both sides at once, and in a moment they were all laughing together. In fact they all had such a good laugh that they decided to forget the enmity of their fathers and play together for a while. The Blood boys asked the Crow boys to join them for a few days. They did so, and that night they sat beside a great camp-fire talking to each other in the sign language, telling of the deeds of their ancestors.

Chief Buffalo Lance in telling the above story concludes with this striking sentence: "We never hated the Crows after that." How true that is; people who laugh together find it difficult to hate. A sense of humour would save the world from many a cruel war.

One of the greatest medicine men the Black-foot ever produced achieved the beginning of

his great fame on just such a runaway trip as that described above. This chief was still living a few years ago on the Blackfoot Reserve at Gleichen, and his name was Mokuyi-Kinosi—or Wolf Head. He was then eighty-six years old and was still more powerful among his people than any head chief.

When he was seventeen years of age, he decided to run away from his people and seek new adventure in the wilderness of the northwest prairies. The tribe was at that time camping on the Red Deer River. He took three young companions with him, all of whom, like himself, aspired to become great warriors on their own merits. They set out in the middle of an August night with nothing but their buffalo robes and fire-arms. Just before noon on the following day, as the four boys were crossing an open plain, they were overtaken by a terrific thunderstorm. The wind almost swept them away, and to protect themselves they found shelter under a small clump of trees and tied themselves up in their blankets. Suddenly there was a terrific crash and the heavens were filled with a brilliant display of lightning. That was the last thing Wolf Head remembered for a long time. When he came to himself he was bleeding from the nose and the mouth, and his body was cut and slashed as if with a dozen knives. He was in great pain, and when he tried to walk he could only move in a circle. He had been struck by lightning. How long he wandered blindly about he does not know, probably a day or

more, before he was found by his people. Two of the other boys had run back to camp and told the tribe that he was dead. Later the body of the fourth boy was found dead about four hundred yards from the spot where they had crouched together to protect themselves from the storm.

From that time on the exploits of Wolf Head not only gave him great renown as a medicine man, but many of them have been so remarkable as to create interest and astonishment among the white men who have known him in recent years. Perhaps it will be best to allow him to tell his own story.

“All I remember of this thing was that after we saw the lightning I went to sleep and dreamed that I was in a teepee. I was sitting with a woman who said she was the ‘Woman Thunder’. She sang several songs and gave them to me as my medicine songs. After a while the woman’s boy ‘Boy Thunder’ came in; and he sang my war-song and gave it to me. The woman then told me not to be scared in war, because I was going to live to be an old man, and that I was going to do many things that would surprise my people. After they took me back to camp I was in great pain, and I went off into another dream. Then Boy Thunder came to me and said ‘I am going to make a great medicine man of you. You will do wonderful things. I shall come to you many times when you are

asleep and each time I shall teach you something new.' As the years passed Boy Thunder kept coming to me, and every time he would tell me how to do something that I never knew about before. He taught me all about Indian medicine, and I became a great medicine man. After I had grown up, a white medicine man came among us to teach us all about the Great Spirit of the white man. He took our language and put it in writing for us. [The white medicine man here referred to is Archdeacon Tims, of the Sarcee Indian Reserve.] One night after this white medicine man had come to us, Boy Thunder came to me in my sleep and he spread a large tanned buffalo skin on the ground. Then he picked it up and hung it on the wall, so that it was all stretched out with the legs hanging down. There were a lot of markings on it which looked strange to me. Boy Thunder said: 'Do you know what these are?' 'No,' I said. 'They are different languages,' he said. 'Each line you see is a different language written out. Do you recognize any of them?' 'No,' I said. 'Look hard,' he told me. I looked for a long time but I could see nothing that I knew. 'Look again,' said Boy Thunder. Then I saw something I could read. 'What is it?' he said. 'The Blackfoot language in writing,' I told him. He said "That is right, and from now you will be able to read this language.' "

Now the astonishing thing about that story is that Archdeacon Tims (who knows the Bloods, Piegans and Blackfoot as well if not better than any white man) bears testimony to the fact that Wolf Head without any teaching *was* able to read and write the Blackfoot language, using the system he, Archdeacon Tims, had invented.

Here is another remarkable incident in the life of the great Blackfoot medicine man. One night Boy Thunder came to Wolf Head and told him how to take photographs with a little camera one of the missionaries had given him, and how to develop them. Wolf Head took this camera, and without any instruction on how to use it, came back that afternoon with a fully developed photograph of "White-Headed Chief" sitting on his horse. There was no one on those prairies for miles around who owned a camera, much less any material for developing a film.

The next exhibition of Wolf Head's remarkable power was shown when he went to sleep one night and awoke next day with the power of a sculptor. He set to work and carved out of stone two life-sized busts of King Edward and Queen Victoria, whose likenesses he had seen on two medals presented by the Hudson's Bay Company to the head chief. These busts are owned by Mr. George Gooderham of the Blackfoot reservation at Gleichen, Alberta (according to Chief Buffalo Lance). He has been offered considerable money for them by various

museums and by the Canadian Government, but has refused to part with them. They are good likenesses and are declared by sculptors to be works of genius.

Wolf Head's last curious exploit was performed about ten years ago. He went to sleep one night and Boy Thunder came to him and told him how to be an engineer. The next morning he went over to the coal mines on the reserve, and after several days' work he constructed a complete coal-mining system. According to the agency and government authorities, it could not be improved on by the best modern mining engineers. Working alone in this remarkable mine, Wolf Head mined \$12.00 worth of coal a day until he got tired of it. The above stories are all taken from *Long Lance* (Farrar & Rhinehart).

After much persuasion on the part of various missionaries, Wolf Head a few years ago gave up his practices as the tribal medicine man and accepted the religion of the white man. Since that date, he declares, he has lost all his powers as a medicine man.

"Boy Thunder never came to me again," he said sadly. "I was a rich man when I changed my religion; I had many horses, now I have nothing. I am poor, and I have no medicine powers left; they all flew away when I gave up my old religion."

Nevertheless the tribe still looks up to him as a great man. He is still the possessor of a

medicine teepee which would bring him a fortune in horses if he would sell it. But he will never sell; it was given to him by Boy Thunder, who at the same time gave him a second teepee and showed him how to paint the beautiful figures on it. One of the teepees is blue and the other yellow, and both have a huge painting of the Thunder Bird on them. The South Blackfoot at Browning, Montana, persuaded Wolf Head to sell the blue teepee to their nation, and they have it at Browning today. But the yellow teepee is Wolf Head's home—and a reminder of his days of glory as the greatest medicine man in the whole north-west.

Just as Wolf Head stands out as the greatest of all the medicine men of the Blackfoot Confederacy, a great chief called "Rock Thunder" lives in their history as an example of unselfish heroism.

About the year 1880 a company of Blackfoot warriors, travelling in the mountains where they could not use horses, came unexpectedly upon a party of seventy Crees. It was in mid-winter and the snow was deep. The commander of the Blackfoot war-party soon realized that the Crees were ignorant of their approach, and it was decided to delay action till a surprise attack could be made at dawn. But the Crees were equipped with snowshoes and no one could touch them in the skill and speed with which they could travel on this kind of equipment. The Blackfoot was never a match for the Cree on snowshoes. Something must be done to han-

dicap them or they would easily out-distance their enemies. At night the snowshoes were piled on end near the camp-fire to dry. At midnight a young Blackfoot wriggled his way into camp, and without being detected he changed the snowshoes so that no warrior would have a pair—two rights and two lefts were put together, and as far as possible the harness of the snowshoes was tangled. Then at dawn the long low bellow of the mountain lion echoed through the hills from the throat of the Blackfoot scout, a signal that all was ready for the massacre. So sudden was the attack of the Blackfoot warriors that the Crees had scarcely time to rise from their sleeping bags. They ran wildly for their snowshoes, only to find them all mismated, and when the short fierce encounter was over every Cree, except one boy, had been killed:—belated revenge for the Edmonton massacre of a few years before.

Now it happened that only one Blackfoot was wounded, but that man was their great chief Rock Thunder. He had sustained a severed sinew in the back of his ankle which made it impossible for him to walk. With his arms about the necks of two fellow-warriors, he kept up with the party for several days while they made their way through the snow back to camp. But he soon began to feel that he was a drag on the party, and he requested that he be allowed to die in the manner usually chosen by incapacitated warriors. But his companions refused to leave him. Meanwhile food was

scarce, and terrible cold had descended upon them. Finally Rock Thunder called a council, and he spoke to his men:

“Brothers,” he said, “our food will be scarce before we get back to our people. We have suffered many hardships already, and we have many miles to travel. If we do not hurry on, large numbers of Crees will be upon us to seek vengeance and you may all die. Why should I be allowed to endanger the lives of my brothers? I shall gladly die—it will be a small price to pay for our great victory. I beseech you, build me a fire and allow me to die like a warrior rather than live to cause the death of others. This way our success will only cost one life, but if I live it may cost many lives.”

Finally, the old chief prevailed and the party gathered a great number of logs and piled them in a huge pile. In the centre of the square of logs they placed a heap of soft dry brush, and without a word Rock Thunder climbed over the logs and took his seat upon the pile of brush. With his own flint he lighted the brush beneath him. Then chanting his death song as the smoke slowly grew into flames, he sat and looked far out over the rolling mountains towards the spot where his last victory had been won. He ran the back of his hand over his forehead once to wipe the sweat from his brow, but that was the only movement he made. As the flames leaped higher he continued to chant his song, and then

as the choking tongues of fire reached his body, he wrapped his robe around his head and died.

White men have built statues to commemorate the deeds of those who died to save others. Rock Thunder's name lives in the hearts of his people.

CHAPTER X

THE STORY OF "ALMIGHTY VOICE"*

IN the summer of 1895, "Almighty Voice", the giant young son of "Sounding Sky" and "Spotted Calf", was arrested for killing a range steer that belonged to the Government of the North-West Territories, which in those days met in Regina.

It now appears that the act was not a deliberate crime, as the boy thought it was one of a herd belonging to his father. The event took place on the "One Arrow Indian Reserve" near Duck Lake in Saskatchewan, where there was a large settlement of half-breeds and a Mounted Police post. After the arrest Almighty Voice was taken to Duck Lake and placed in the Mounted Police guard-house. One of the policemen in charge of the post jokingly told the boy that he was going to be hanged for killing that steer. The corporal told the Indian boy this to scare him; but he little realized how far-reaching in its effects his joke would be. In fact before that bit of humour reached its conclusion several people paid for it with their lives.

Almighty Voice was no ordinary Indian boy

*Based upon the story as told in *Long Lance*, (Farrar & Rhinehart).

to be intimidated by a white man's threat. The Indian does not believe in hanging. Shoot him or drag him at the heels of a running horse and he will show no sign of fear, but hanging was a torture unknown among the red men. Almighty Voice had been brought up to look after himself, and already had won a great reputation as a runner, a hunter, and a young man of great physical strength and resourcefulness.

It was in the afternoon when Corporal Dickson told Almighty Voice that he was going to be hanged. That night in the little guard-house, which still stands at Duck Lake, the Mounted Police chained the Indian lad to a heavy iron ball and left him to roll himself up in his Indian blanket and go to sleep on the floor of the guard-room. Corporal Dickson was to guard him till midnight; then he was to be relieved by another Mountie who was sleeping upstairs. Shortly before 11 o'clock that night, Corporal Dickson decided that he wanted to go off duty a little early, so he got up from the dimly lighted table where he had been sitting, and taking the butt of his rifle he banged on the ceiling and shouted to his companion to come down. The Mountie upstairs rolled over in his sleep, and shouted "All right, coming", and promptly went back to sleep again. After waiting impatiently for a few minutes, Corporal Dickson banged on the ceiling again, and presently, half asleep, the relief guard came down the ladder. All this time Almighty Voice, wrapped in his blanket and apparently fast asleep,

had watched every move of his captors. Corporal Dickson went out and the new guard went over to the table and sat down; presently his head began to nod, and after a few moments dropped gently on his folded hands and he was fast asleep.

This was the chance Almighty Voice had waited for. He picked up the heavy ball to which he was chained, and quietly tiptoed over to the table. He reached over the Mountie's shoulder, picked up the bunch of keys lying beside his hands, and quickly stooping over he unlocked the chain on his ankle. With a bound he reached the door, opened it, and quietly passed out into the night. Now he knew that he was free, for no man, white or red, had ever beaten him in a foot-race.

It was six miles to the Saskatchewan River. No one knows what speed the Indian boy made in that six-mile run, but once he reached it, only a few moments were required to build a small raft, and before the Police knew he had gone, he was across the Saskatchewan speeding towards his home. At daybreak he arrived at his mother's lodge, having put twenty miles between himself and the Mounties. When Almighty Voice entered his mother's lodge his first words were: "The Mounted Police told me today that they were going to hang me for killing that steer. They will never hang me, I will die fighting."

Early that morning the Mounted Police rode into the reserve and proceeded to search for

the fugitive boy. They entered the lodge of his mother, Spotted Calf, and searched every inch of the place. One place they missed. In a corner of the lodge was a pile of provisions covered with blankets and buffalo robes. Almighty Voice was concealed beneath these robes with his rifle aimed ready for the first policeman that touched the blankets. Fortunately they glanced at them but did not touch them. After the police had gone, Almighty Voice took his fifteen-year old wife and made for the Kenistino Reserve in the north. He took also an old muzzle-loading rifle and two horses.

The Mounted Police immediately despatched Sergeant C. C. Colebrook and a half-breed scout to bring the escaped prisoner in. They followed hard upon the Indian boy's heels, and one morning as they were riding through a lonely stretch of country, they heard a gun-shot nearby. Spurring their horses forward, they came into a little clearing, and there was Almighty Voice picking up a prairie chicken he had just shot. Nearby his girl-wife stood holding the horses. When the Indian saw the police he swiftly reloaded his rifle and stood waiting. At twenty yards he ordered them to halt. "Stop, or I'll shoot," he shouted in Cree.

"No," said Sergeant Colebrook, "I'm going to do my duty." Again Almighty Voice spoke: "Another step and I'll shoot." The Sergeant rode on. Crack, went the rifle, and Sergeant Colebrook fell forward on his horse's neck,

dead. Then turning to the half-breed scout, Almighty Voice said: "I'm not going to kill you, but I'm going to mark you." Once more the gun spoke, and a bullet shattered the half-breed's elbow. The half-breed turned his horse, and as he dashed away, the Indian shouted: "If I ever see you again I'll kill you."

The killing of Sergeant Colebrook stirred the whole north-west. Within twenty-four hours the man-hunt was on in earnest. The order now went forth that Almighty Voice was to be captured alive or dead. But for two years the police sought him in vain; he had dropped from sight as completely as if the earth had opened and swallowed him up. The Mounties scoured the plains and the forests, but could find no trace of him.

In the book referred to at the beginning of this chapter, we have the story of where Almighty Voice spent part of the time during these mysterious two years. The author was a relative of the father and mother of Almighty Voice, and from them he learned the truth about the boy's wanderings during the years of 1895-1897. Every few months during that time he would make a visit to his mother's lodge. Like a ghost from another world he would appear silently at the door of his mother's teepee. He would peer cautiously through the flap and then enter without a word. He would eat like a wolf, then drop off into a deep slumber that sometimes lasted for two days. Once

when he came home he brought his young wife; she had a moss bag strapped on her back and in it was a little brown baby.

But in the spring of 1897 the Mounted Police adopted a different plan. They had suspicions that the boy was keeping in touch with his parents. They knew that there was a strong tie between Almighty Voice and his people. For two years they had had Sounding Sky, the Indian boy's father, imprisoned at Duck Lake. Now the police decided to let him go and use him as a decoy to catch the son. A week after Sounding Sky was set free, a half-breed spy of the police reported that Almighty Voice had been home and was somewhere in the vicinity of the reserve. The next day Inspector James Wilson, in charge of the Duck Lake Post, sent two constables and a half-breed scout named Napoleon Venne to the reserve to see what they could find. They rode up to the Indian camp and dismounted. Napoleon Venne, the half-breed scout, pretended to be rolling a cigarette, but all the time his eyes were examining every tent and bush. Suddenly his horse jumped and snorted as if terrified, and Venne heard a slight rustling in the bush beside the trail. As he turned to look a shot rang out, and Venne fell on his face shot through the chest. The two constables picked him up and rushed him back to Duck Lake. It was a boy of fifteen, a friend of Almighty Voice, who shot Venne. If it had been otherwise Venne would have been a dead

man. As it was, he recovered and left the country.

The news of the shooting and Almighty Voice's reappearance was received with grave concern at Prince Albert, forty miles away, and at midnight that same day twelve Mounted Policemen under Captain Allan set out on horseback for the scene of action.

At the same time another force under Inspector Wilson set out from Duck Lake. Captain Allan's party arrived next morning, and as they approached the reserve they saw in the distance three young lads half naked, moving towards a small clump of trees. Captain Allan's field glasses soon told him that these were the people he sought. Almighty Voice had been joined in his death feud by two boys—one his cousin who shot Napoleon Venne, and the other, his brother-in-law Topean. These two lads, not sixteen years of age, had chosen to make the stand and die with their friend.

As soon as Captain Allan realized he had sighted his quarry, he gave the order to charge. The three boys turned and waited until the riders were within fifty yards, then a volley of shots rang out, and Captain Allan and Sergeant Raver fell, one with a shattered hip, and the other with a shattered right arm. Corporal Hockin was now in command of the detachment. He halted the troop to look after the wounded, and meanwhile the three Indian lads retired to a thicket of trees, now known as 'Almighty Voice Bluff'.

Corporal Hockin decided to wait for reinforcements, and late that afternoon the detachment from Duck Lake and another force from Prince Albert arrived. At six o'clock that evening Corporal Hockin called for volunteers to attack the thicket. Nine policemen and a number of civilians volunteered. The three Indian boys watched from their cover, and as this force moved towards the bluff, opened fire. Corporal Hockin fell dead, but the attackers moved steadily on. Another volley, and Ernest Grundy, Postmaster of Duck Lake, fell with a bullet through his heart. A moment later Constable Kerr fell, shot through the chest. Meanwhile Topean, Almighty Voice's brother-in-law, was killed, and Almighty Voice himself had received a bullet which shattered his right leg. The casualties now numbered eight since the Indian boy escaped two years before. There were four dead and four wounded.

But the real battle had not yet begun. With their three dead, the attacking force retreated, and that night they tried to set fire to the bush and smoke the Indians out. This was a failure. A third call for reinforcements was sent out, and a cordon of pickets was thrown around the bush to prevent the Indian boys' escape.

Meanwhile police headquarters at Regina had heard of the battle, and twenty-five men and a nine-pounder field gun, under command of Assistant Commissioner McIlree and Inspector MacDonnell (later General Sir Archibald Mac-

Donnell, Commander of the 1st Division of the Canadian Corps) were on their way to the scene. Another detachment from Prince Albert under Inspector Gagnon got under way. This brought to the field almost the entire strength of the Mounted Police of Assiniboia. Hundreds of civilian volunteers had also rushed to aid the police. Orders were now given that too many lives had been lost already, and that the police were not to expose themselves any more. Almighty Voice was to be driven out or killed by artillery fire.

As the second night of the siege settled upon the field of battle, the troops heard a strong voice from the trees: "We have had a good fight today. I have worked hard and I am hungry. You have plenty of food; send me some, and to-morrow we'll finish the fight."

When this message was interpreted, the Mounted Police were amazed, but it expressed the code of the Indian. Almighty Voice was a marvellous shot, for early next morning a crow flew over the thicket. Bang went the rifle and the crow fell into the bush to be eaten raw by the Indian boys.

All night long Spotted Calf, the mother, had stood on a rise just back of the clump of trees in which her son was hidden, and through the darkness she recounted the brave deeds of the boy's famous father Sounding Sky. "Don't weaken, my son," she shouted. "You must die fighting them."

Now and then Almighty Voice would answer his mother from the darkness. He told her he and his cousin had dug a hole and covered it with brush. They were lying under this brush with their rifles poking through. Two Mounted Police lay dead ten feet from the pit, and he had taken their rifles and ammunition and thrown away his old muzzle-loader. "I am almost starving," he said. "I am eating the bark off trees, I have dug into the ground as far as my arm will reach but can get no water. Have no fear, I will hold out to the end."

The following day fresh reinforcements arrived, and hundreds of civilians flocked about the place. Early on Saturday, Constable O'Kelly looking through his field-glasses thought he saw one of the wounded policemen moving, and he called for a volunteer to go and rescue Constable Hockin. Dr. Stewart of Duck Lake and O'Kelly jumped into a buckboard and tore down the hill as fast as the horses could gallop. They stopped right on the edge of the thicket and Constable O'Kelly piled the limp form of Constable Hockin into the back of the buckboard, while Dr. Stewart jumped out and held the horses. Constable O'Kelly had to keep jumping to avoid the rain of bullets directed at him, but he was only hit in the shoe. Dr. Stewart, who stood at the horses' heads could have been shot down with ease, but not a shot was fired at him. Almighty Voice had no quarrel with the Doctor, only with the police.

On Saturday evening the two guns—a nine-

pounder and a seven-pounder—were in position, and at six o'clock the shelling began. For an hour the shelling went on. At the end of that time it ceased, and a voice was heard from the woods: "You have done well, but you will have to do better." All night the crowd watched the bush. At midnight from the hill behind the thicket came the sound of the old mother's voice singing the death song of her son, and then shortly after was heard the deep-toned voice of the son answering with his own death song.

At six o'clock the next morning the bombardment began again. At noon the pelting ceased. At one o'clock James McKay, later Justice of the Supreme Court of Saskatchewan, and William Drain, decided to lead a raid on the bluff. Here lying in a brush-covered hole, they found the dead body of Almighty Voice. His cousin was lying beside him severely wounded but living. On a tree near the spot where the bodies of three policemen had fallen, these words had been carved in Cree: "Here died three brave men". It had been put there by Almighty Voice as a tribute to his enemies.

Thus ended one of the most spectacular Indian fights in the history of western Canada.

BIBLIOTHEQUE

du

COLLEGE SAINT-JEAN
EDMONTON ALBERTA

CHAPTER XI

THE WISDOM OF CROWFOOT

ONE of the greatest chiefs in the history of the Blackfoot Confederacy was Crowfoot, known personally to hundreds of the old-timers of southern Alberta from the days when ranchers began to settle in the country till the time of his death in April 1890.

Crowfoot was born near Blackfoot Crossing, the son of a great Blackfoot chief called "Many Names" and a Blood woman. From earliest years he had distinguished himself as a youth of sound judgment and great courage. He had been given the name of "Bear Ghost" as a boy, but his name was changed when he was fifteen years of age, when he revenged the treacherous death of his older brother by leading an expedition into Montana and thoroughly defeating the Snakes.

Paintings and photographs of Crowfoot, most of them showing him as a man of sixty-five or seventy years of age, reveal striking physical characteristics. Six feet tall and nobly proportioned, he had the dignity and quiet self-possession of the born leader of men. While still a young man he succeeded his father as head of the Confederacy and for over thirty years was himself a court of last appeal in all matters

relating to the welfare of his people. It is said that he won his position of undisputed leader of the Blackfoot on the occasion of a terrific battle between the Crees and the Blackfoot which took place at Three Ponds, a valley between the Battle and Red Deer Rivers, on December 3rd, 1866. On that occasion the Blackfoot were thoroughly beaten and about to retreat with great loss of life, when Crowfoot suddenly appeared on the scene. He rallied the discouraged warriors and dashing into the fray he drove the Crees back into their own country in complete confusion. A few years later a combined force of Crees and Assiniboinés were almost annihilated by Crowfoot and his warriors in a desperate battle which took place near Lethbridge.

Stories of these engagements are still told by the old men who lived through them, but like most stories related by men whose memories have grown uncertain, details and exact dates are missing. But they are referred to as the last of the many great battles between the Crees and Blackfoot.

Crowfoot was not a lover of war, and great as his reputation as a warrior undoubtedly was, his fame as an orator and as a counsellor of peace was even greater. His speech on the occasion of the signing of the treaty at Blackfoot Crossing in 1877 is a matter of history, and reveals the temper and balanced judgment of a great citizen.

"While I speak, be kind and patient. I have to speak for my people, who are numerous, and who rely upon me to follow that course which in the future will tend to their good. The plains are large and wide; we are the children of the plains; it is our home and the buffalo has been our food always. You must look upon us as your children now and be indulgent to us. If the Police had not come to this country where would we all be now? Bad men and bad whiskey were killing us so fast that very few would have been left today. The Police have protected us as the feathers of the bird protect it from the frost of winter.

"It always happens that far-away countries hear exaggerated stories about one another. The news grows as it travels until it becomes from a little thing, a great lie. I often hear things about the white people, I do not believe them until I find the truth. Why should you kill us, or we kill you? Let our white friends have compassion and we will have compassion. I have two hearts, my friends, one is like stone, the other is kind and tender. Treat us badly—my heart is stone. Treat us kindly and my heart is the heart of a child."

There is a quality of nobility and sound common sense in that speech not often found among wild untutored men.

As everyone knows, during the Rebellion of 1885 Crowfoot kept faith with the white men.

If he had not done so one of the greatest disasters in Canadian history might have occurred. Crowfoot had apparently made his decision in the matter some years before, when he met Louis Riel in Montana. It is said that the two men met at Tiger Hills, Montana, in 1880 and Riel had tried to persuade Crowfoot to join him in a rebellion, and on that occasion the latter is reported to have said:

“To rise for war, there must be an object, to rebel there must be a wrong to right, and in either case one must consider what benefit is ever gained from war. The buffalo have gone from the plains; the fault is partly ours, but more the fault of white men far south where they are killed in thousands for their skins, and not for food. The food we eat now the White Mother gives us. Without it we starve. There is nothing to be gained by the war you suggest.”

If the above story is historic, as it may well be, it is as striking an example of high moral character and integrity as we have in Canadian history. Many stories are told of the cunning logic of Crowfoot in the days of his first contacts with white men. When it first became known that reservations were being set aside for the red men, there was of course great resentment among the tribes. But the Plains Indians were in a difficult position; the buffalo had gone and they were hungry. It was perhaps better to live as the ward of the white man

than to starve. When the Commissioners first approached Crowfoot they told him that all the tribes to the South and East had signed treaties and were living on reservations and getting on well. They advised Crowfoot and his followers to give up their roaming existence and settle down in the same way. This first meeting took place at Milk River in southern Alberta, and the story is told that on that occasion the white men spread a lot of one dollar bills on the ground and said:

"This is what the white man trades with, this is his buffalo robe. Just as you trade with skins, we trade with these pieces of paper." Then the old chief picked up one of the dollar bills which had on it a picture of a man with a bald head, and looking around at his men, Crowfoot said this, "Stiki Kikinasi"—"Bald Head". When the white chief had laid all his money on the ground and shown how much he would give if the Indians would sign a treaty, the Red man took a handful of clay and made a ball of it, and put it on the fire and cooked it; it did not crack. Then he said to the white man, "Now put your money on the fire and see if it will last as long as the clay." Then the White Chief said, "No, my money will burn because it is made of paper." Then with an amused gleam in his piercing grey eyes the old chief said, "Oho, your money is not as good as our land, is it? The wind will blow it away; fire will

burn it; water will rot it. Nothing can destroy our land. You don't make very good trade." Then with a smile the dignified Chief of the Blackfoot picked up a handful of sand from the bank of the Milk River; this he handed to the white man and said: "You count the grains of sand in that while I count the money you offer for my land." The white chief poured the sand into the palm of his hand and said, "I would not live long enough to count this, but you can count that money in a few minutes." "Very well," said the wise Crowfoot, "our land is more valuable than your money. It will last for ever. It will not perish as long as the sun shines and the water flows, and through all the years it will give life to men and beasts. We cannot sell the lives of men and animals, and therefore we cannot sell the land. It was put here by the Great Spirit and we cannot sell it because it does not really belong to us. You can count your money and burn it with the nod of a buffalo's head, but only the Great Spirit can count the grains of sand and the blades of grass on these plains. As a present to you we will give you anything we have that you can take with you, but the land we cannot give."

Oddly enough the great chief of the Crees, "Poundmaker", who held the Battleford front for Louis Riel during the rebellion of 1885, was an adopted son of Crowfoot. When he was a

young man he met Crowfoot at a trading post in the Eagle Hills. The Blackfoot Chief had just lost a son of the same age whom he had loved dearly, and as he talked to the young Cree he thought he saw in him a marked resemblance to his dead boy. He told him if he would come home with him he would adopt him as his own son. The young Cree, impressed with the strength of the great Blackfoot chief and knowing his fame as a warrior, went back with him to his lodges and lived there for several years. It has been said by those who knew him that Poundmaker acquired through the years he spent with Crowfoot something of the dignity and good judgment of his foster-father. At any rate, when he went back to his own people several years later he had already the dignity and bearing of a great chief, and a name for daring second only to that of Crowfoot himself. The love between these two strong red men did more than anything else to keep peace between the Crees and the Blackfoot and to heal the centuries-old breach between them.

Much has been said about the part Poundmaker played in the rebellion of 1885. It should always be remembered that an Indian tribe was organized along thoroughly democratic lines. Plans were always worked out in Council meetings and the wishes of the people were made known through minor chiefs. The head chief had no arbitrary powers, but on important occasions he spoke representing the tribe. Sometimes it was necessary for the chief

to follow the demands of his people, as was obviously the case with "Big Bear" at the time of the Frog Lake massacre. At the Fort Carleton treaty meeting between the Crees and the Government in 1876, Poundmaker gave expression to this basic rule in Indian affairs, when in closing his remarks he said, "This is all I have been told to say. This is the voice of my people." It is equally obvious that in the excitement which swept the country in 1885, Poundmaker was powerless to stem the tide of resentment and bitterness that overtook and overwhelmed the spirit of good-will which was gaining ground among the Indians. When Poundmaker's men pillaged Battleford and fought the soldiers at Cut Knife, the chief was a half-hearted participant or the story might have been different. He was engaged in a war for which he had no enthusiasm, but was led along by his people; Crowfoot's attitude he fully approved and would have followed if he had been able to do so. At his trial in Regina he addressed the Judge with the quiet dignity and fearless candour of a great chief: "Everything I could do was done to stop bloodshed. Had I wanted war, I should not be here now. I should be on the prairie. You did not catch me, I gave myself up. You have got me because I wanted justice." He was given three years in Stoney Mountain penitentiary, and after he was set free he went to visit his foster-father, Chief Crowfoot, at Blackfoot Crossing, and died there quite suddenly. On

the brow of a hill overlooking the beautiful valley of the Bow River near Blackfoot Crossing stands a monument erected by the Canadian Government in memory of Crowfoot, and not far away is a tablet setting forth that here Crowfoot made his camp and died.

Only one thing is lacking in that scene. The name of Poundmaker should be written below that of his foster-father, that they might be united in death as they were to an extraordinary degree in life.

CHAPTER XII

AN INDIAN BOY'S FIRST GLIMPSE OF THE WHITE MEN

THE following story is told by Chief Buffalo Child Long Lance in his book *Long Lance*.*

"When I was a small boy, word came to our tribe that white men had built a post in the Rockies and were trading gunpowder and white man's food for buffalo robes, and since we had a lot of good skins our chief decided to go there to do some trading.

"We children looked forward to seeing white people, for we had never been close enough to get a good look at them. We wondered what their boys would look like, and their women, for we had never seen any of these. We had always called the white people 'Itey-Skada' which means 'white foreheads', because their faces were tanned brown but their foreheads were white from wearing hats.

"We travelled westward along the Namaka River till we came to the foot-hills, and there we met a band of Rocky Mountain Assiniboines whose hunting grounds were in the Rockies. Their chief, 'Travels-Against-the-

*Published by Farrar & Rhinehart.

Wind', protested that we were invading his hunting grounds, but our chief said: 'Our meat for the winter is already put away in those bags you see the women carrying (pemmican). We do not come to hunt your wild goats. We come to see the white men and trade with them. We want some nice blankets with red stripes like you are wearing.'

" 'Oh well,' said the Assiniboine Chief, 'that's all right, go ahead.' So we sat down, and the Assiniboine women made us some tea. We had never had tea before. The old people liked it, but we boys found it bitter and we did not enjoy it. While we sat there, the old Chief told us about the white men. He told us to beware of the white man's food, as it would make our teeth come out. He pulled up his upper lip and said 'Look, my teeth are good, and so are the teeth of our old people, but look what happens to the teeth of the young people who get too much of the white man's food,' and here he walked over to a young boy and opened his mouth and showed us his bad teeth. 'Our people,' he said, 'never used to die until they were over a hundred years old; now since we started to eat white man's food we are sick all the time. We keep getting worse and soon it will kill us all.'

"Then the chief reached up and took hold of a shock of his hair, and said, 'See, this hair. Well, the white man has none on the

top of his head at all. The crown of his head is as slick as a buffalo's nose. Every time the Indian eats he rubs the grease from his fingers into his scalp. White men wash all grease out of the hair with bad medicine called soap, takes all grease out and his hair drops out. Swap your buffalo robes for blankets, but don't touch the white man's food or his bad medicine soap for washing.'

"The next day we started north, accompanied by fifty of the Assiniboinés. We travelled for six days, keeping close to the edge of the foot-hills. On the sixth day we camped across the river from the white man's post. After we pitched camp, some of our warriors went out to see if they could find some otter. While they were out they came upon a cabin, and they saw six long-haired people with light skin going in and out of this place. Our warrior watched them for a while and tried to figure out what they were; they had never seen any people like them before. They were not Indians and they were not white men, so one of our warriors called 'Big Darkness' said they must be the white man's women. They had never seen a white woman, so they decided that's what they must be. When the warrior came back to camp and told the others about it, Sun Calf, who had seen white women, said he didn't think they were white women. So a great argument took place, and one carrier bet five ponies against Sun Calf that they were white wo-

men. Well, there was only one way to settle the question, and that was to capture one of the strange creatures and bring it back to camp and let the camp decide what they were.

"When darkness came, ten of our warriors, led by Sun Calf and Big Darkness crept over to the shack and overpowered one of the strange people and brought it back.

"We were all sitting around a big fire singing when the warriors got back with their prisoner. They led a strange-looking, very frightened person to the fire, and Big Darkness said: 'See, I told you, it is a woman.' But Sun Calf said: 'No, white women didn't wear long hair braided like that.' They argued so long that one of the Assiniboinés came over to see what all the row was about, and when he saw the poor frightened prisoner, he laughed so long and so loudly that all his fellow tribesmen rolled out of their blankets and came to see what the fun was all about, and soon the whole fifty of the Assiniboinés were shouting with mirth. Meanwhile the Blackfoot could only gaze in astonishment and wait for the storm of mirth to blow over. At last one of the Assiniboinés said: 'Oh, you inexperienced Blackfoot! This is neither a white man nor a white woman. It is a man from far across the minne-tonka—the Pacific Ocean.' It was a Chinaman, one of the cooks from a prospector's camp!

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"The next day, the white minister at the Hudson's Bay post sent word that he was coming to visit us to tell us about the white man's God 'Wahkantenka' the 'Great Spirit'. When they received this news, all our Indians painted their faces and put on their best medicine clothes. The medicine man got out his drum. Soon we were all ready to receive them.

"When we saw the minister coming, the medicine man began to sing, the drums beat, and our Chief went out to meet the white minister. They shook hands and then the white minister turned to the Blackfoot medicine man and said: 'There is only one God in Heaven, and I have come to tell you about Him.' Now Indians never interrupt anyone when he is talking even if he should talk all day—that is an ancient courtesy among Indians—so everyone stood and listened to the minister while he told us of the white man's God. He made a long speech. He said that the Indians must lay down their arms and live at peace with the white man who was coming into the country. When he finished, our chief arose and addressed him. He said: 'Why do you tell us to be good? We Indians are not bad; you white people may be, but we are not. We do not steal except when we need horses. We do not tell lies; we take care of our old people and our poor when they are helpless. We do not need that which you tell us.' 'But,' said the mission-

ary, 'there is only one God, and you must worship him.'

" 'Then, if that is true,' said our chief, 'we Indians worship the same God as you do—only in a different way. When the Great Spirit made the world, he gave the Indians one way to worship Him, and he gave the white man another way, because we are different people and we live differently. The Indian should keep to his way, and the white man to his, and we should all work together for God and not against one another. The Indian does not try to tell you how to worship God. We like to see you worship Him in your own way because we know you understand that way.'

" 'But the Great Spirit you speak of is not the same one that we worship,' said the missionary. 'Then there must be two Gods,' said the chief. 'Your God made a land for you across the big water. He gave you houses to live in, good things to eat and fast things to travel in. He gave the Indian the teepee to live in and the buffalo to feed on. But your white people did not like the land that your God gave you and you came over here to take the Indians' land. If you did that, how do we know, if we should accept your God, that he won't take everything from us, too, when we die and go to your hunting-grounds?'

" 'But the Indians must learn how to pray,' said the minister. 'We do pray,' said the

chief. 'This is the prayer we pray at our Sun Dance:

Great Spirit, our Father, help us and teach us in the way of the Truth; and keep me and my family, and my tribe on our True Father's path, so that we may be in good condition in our minds and in our bodies. Make peace in the world. We thank you for the sun and the good summer weather again; and we hope they will bring good crops of grass for the animals, and things to eat for all the people.'

"Then a white man came over to tell us that the trading post was ready for us to come over and trade with them. So our chief and the minister shook hands, and we all mounted our ponies and rode over to the post. As we rode into the post, we passed some stables with cows in them. We had never been around cows before, and the smell of them made us sick. We all had to hold our hands over our noses as we rode by this stable. We youngsters had always thought that cows would smell strong like buffalo, but they smelled sweet like milk, and that made us want to vomit.

"When we arrived at the post, the traders came out to meet us and talked with our people. We boys crept up beside them to catch the white man's smell, and they smelled like those cattle and it made us feel sick. Then they invited us to a big feast. They brought out a lot of food, but we could not

eat it. Everything tasted like cows. Their tea had cows' milk in it; cows' butter was on their bread, and their cakes had cream in them, and the meat was cows' meat. Everything cow! Some of our braves got sick and went out into the bush. After the feast they brought out a lot of things we had never seen before: flour, molasses, bread, axes, tools, and so on. Our chief thought the molasses was grease, and when a barrel was rolled out in front of him, he reached down into it and brought up two handfuls and rubbed it in his hair, saying: 'Oh, this will make good grease for the hair.' We thought the flour was snow, and that the bread was the fungus off trees, and we did not care to trade our robes for these.

"What we wanted most was gun-powder and balls for our guns. So they took us to a shed, and a man supplied us with enough powder and balls to kill all the animals on the prairies.

"The mountain animals were new to us, and we got into serious trouble on the way back when we saw a big hole and thought it was the hole of a marmot; so we laid a noose around it and waited. Presently a brown shaggy head came out of the hole and we gave the noose a quick jerk. There was a terrible yell which sounded more like a human being than an animal. When we pulled the thing out we nearly dropped with fright. With terrible teeth and claws the

brown shaggy animal came at us like a streak of lightning. Fortunately we had three big wolf-dogs with us and they made a dash for it. It turned from us and went straight at the dogs. In a flash it had one of the dogs by the throat, and it tore the head off the dog before the others could reach it. The other two dogs, 'Ponoka' and 'Nisitsi-Stumik', flashed into the fray, and we stood too scared to move, watching the fight. It was the most thrilling battle I have ever seen. Blood spattered everywhere and those unearthly screams kept coming from this horrible demon. At last 'Ponoka' got his long white fangs into the beast's throat and with a fierce growl he swayed wildly from side to side beating the ground with the thing he had gripped. When the fight was over, two of our dogs were dead, and 'Ponoka' was covered with blood. It was a wolverine, the most dangerous animal known to an Indian."

CHAPTER XIII

THE INDIANS' FRIENDS

THE first and most important of the animal friends of the Plains Indians was undoubtedly the buffalo. So far as the Blackfoot people were concerned the buffalo occupied the same position in domestic economy as cows, chickens, pigs and wheat do to the white man's farm today. Not only did the red men of the Plains subsist on the flesh of the buffalo, but from its skin and sinews they made their tents, clothing, saddles, bowstrings and dog-harness. The hide cut into strips served them for ropes; the sinews split into threads was their twine for doing up bundles; the dried dung was often the only fuel they had for weeks together when they were on the trail. Just as we use dollar bills to purchase our supplies so the Blackfoot exchanged dressed skins and robes, dried meat and pemmican—all made from the buffalo—for tea, tobacco, powder, shot and rum.

There were two kinds of buffalo—the wood buffalo and the plains buffalo, and the old traders always regarded them as being of totally different species. The woods buffalo were said to be larger, had different shaped horns and longer hair; they kept to the north of the Saskatchewan River, never ventured on the open

plains and were found as far north as Great Slave Lake. The prairie buffalo kept on the open plains all summer but denned up for the winter in the coulées and wooded banks of such places as Hand Hills, Cypress Hills, and the creek valleys along the south Saskatchewan, Milk River, the Old Man, etc. It is a common belief that the buffalo were all of a rich dark brown colour. As a matter of fact, grey buffalo were not at all uncommon, and occasionally a pure white one was found. These were regarded with great reverence by the Plains Indians, and the owner of a white buffalo skin was looked upon as having been especially favoured by the Great Father.

The buffalo were stupid animals; no amount of slaughter could turn one of those slow-moving herds from its course. If they were moving in herds of tens of thousands towards the Cypress Hills for their winter quarters, they would leave thousands of dead in the Saskatchewan and Red Deer Rivers as they plunged over the banks into the stream below. The approach of a herd could be detected at a distance of twenty miles on a clear day, and the Indians could tell by putting one ear to a gopher hole almost the exact distance at which a herd was passing.

Much of the skill the white man learned in hunting the buffalo he acquired from the Indians. In 1840, twelve hundred and ten Red River carts set out from Fort Garry on a buffalo hunt. The organization used on that occasion was based upon that in common prac-

tice among the Blackfoot. After the start from the settlement was made, a council of all the hunters was held and a President was elected. A number of Captains were then appointed who in turn appointed ten policemen. The duty of the latter was to see that the laws of the hunt were strictly observed. If a man ran a buffalo without permission before the hunt began, his saddle and bridle were cut to pieces and for a second offence of the same description his clothes were stripped from his back; no gun was allowed to be fired till the race actually began. At night the carts were drawn up in a circle with the horses and cattle inside the ring. No hunter could leave camp without permission, and a heavy fine was imposed on those who failed to extinguish their fires.

Next day when the couriers reported the direction and distance of the herds, horsemen to the number of several hundred lined up behind their captains on their swift ponies, and at a given signal they dashed upon the herd and the slaughter began. In every herd there were numbers of blind buffalo. It was believed that they were blinded by prairie fires. At any rate these blind animals seemed to possess a quickened sense of smell and hearing, and it was said that they were the ones that gave the alarm on the approach of the hunters.

Before the white man supplied the Indians with rifles, they used a short bow, about three feet long, and arrows tipped with flint or buffalo bone. Although the Indians and the white men killed the buffalo in thousands every year, and

often only used the choicest cuts of meat, it is doubtful if this regular slaughter would have greatly depleted the herds. It was the professional buffalo hunters of the western states who killed them by thousands for the skins, who gradually over a period of fifteen or twenty years wiped them out. These professional buffalo runners used high-powered rifles, trapped the animals in such a way as to bring about a wholesale slaughter, and frequently returned from the chase with as many as 5,000 skins after a summer's work. The notorious Buffalo Bill claimed to have killed over 5,000 of them in one summer, and set up a record for all time by slaughtering 48 animals in fifty minutes. In spite of this wholesale slaughter, Colonel Dodge reported in 1860 that he rode for twenty-five miles through a herd of buffalo which he estimated at over half a million animals.

As late as 1874 Colonel French, on his way to Fort Benton, Montana, wrote in his diary that he passed an immense herd which he and Colonel McLeod computed at between 70,000 and 80,000. The same year the Secretary of the United States Boundary Commission described another herd:

“The number was beyond estimation. Looking at the herd from an elevation of about 1,800 feet above the plains, I was unable to see the end in any direction. The Indians followed the outskirts of the herd, but with all their wastefulness they made little impression on it.”

Notwithstanding the size of these herds, six years later the buffalo had almost disappeared. In 1877, 30,000 buffalo hides were shipped out of Fort McLeod. Two years later, in 1879, there were only 5,000 skins traded at that post.

In the winter of 1882, 400 head of buffalo were killed south of Wood Mountain, and by that time the extermination was complete. The Game Report for 1888 states that only six animals were known to be in existence in Alberta—two old bulls in the Wood Mountain district, and three cows and a bull between the Red Deer and Battle Rivers.

In an effort to stop the slaughter of buffalo by whites, half-breeds and Indians, the North West Council in 1877 passed an ordinance designed to arrest the extermination of the bison. The use of buffalo pounds was forbidden; certain closed seasons were prescribed, and the slaughter of animals under two years of age was prohibited. But it was a case of locking the stable door after the mare was stolen, and was too late to serve any good purpose.

The last great slaughter of buffalo in the United States took place in 1878 when the U. S. Government, in an effort to starve Sitting Bull and his people out of the country, threw a cordon of soldiers across the path of the northern trek of the great herds and penned them up so completely that scarcely any got through to their favourite feeding-grounds on the Bow River. This attempt to starve out Sitting Bull was not effective so far as the wily old Indian was concerned, but on the other hand it pro-

vided a wonderful opportunity for the professional buffalo hunters of the States. Hundreds of thousands of buffalo were slaughtered, and as a result the plight of the Indians became pitiable. In the space of a few short years they had suffered more calamities than befall some people in centuries—small-pox epidemics, whiskey-traders, their land taken from them, and now starvation. It was little wonder that the missionaries found it difficult to persuade them to become Christians. If these were the things they had to suffer from contact with the white men, why should they forsake their faith for one which bred such cruelty? Their old activities of horse-stealing, gambling and fighting were now forbidden. The white man had taught them to love fire-water, but refused to let them have it. Their sun-dances were not allowed, and they were in future to have only one wife. It was difficult for them to see any advantage to themselves in all these changes which had been forced upon them; and to make matters worse, the white man seemed to live in plenty while they were starving.

At last, in 1879, came the first murder of a policeman by an Indian, and the white people in the country were alarmed. If the Blackfoot had taken the war-path at this time, well-armed as they were, and with bitterness in their hearts, we should have had an Indian war as serious as those in the western States. But thanks to the wise restraint of the Police, the influence of Father Lacombe, and the McDougalls, and thanks above all to the splendid old

Blackfoot Chieftain Crowfoot, the disaster was averted. But for the Indians it was a time of great suffering. Famine was upon them. Inspector Denny of the Calgary post describes how the Indians came to the Fort so weak they could scarcely walk, and when he gave them meat they would leap upon the carcasses before they were cold and eat the raw flesh.

So 1879 passed and 1880 came in. In the summer of that year the Sarsi came up to Calgary determined to seize the food they required. Inspector Denny told them they would have to go to Fort Macleod for food, and that they must leave Calgary by the following morning, or, he said, "I shall pull down your lodges for you." When morning came, and they were still there, he went to their camp with thirteen men and set about pulling down the tents as he had promised. The sergeant narrowly escaped being shot through the head, but the Indians were too weak and discouraged to fight, and they departed for Macleod under Police escort.

At Blackfoot Crossing the people in two hundred lodges were starving and many died. Inspector Denny reports twenty-one deaths in one camp. In June, 1880, between twelve and fifteen thousand Bloods, Sarsi, Piegan and Blackfoot were in camp around Fort Macleod, grimly waiting for food which the Police could only provide in small quantities, as their own stores were nearing exhaustion.

Crowfoot sent an appeal to Princess Louise—wife of the Governor-General of Canada, Lord Lorne.

“Our people are starving. Do help us, for some of us have nothing to eat, and many of us can find none anywhere. We have heard that the daughter of our great Mother is now on this side of the Great Lake. She has our Mother’s heart. Let her know that mothers and little ones ask her to give them life for our Great Mother’s sake. She is good and will hear us. Too many other people eat our buffalo, and we have nothing to eat ourselves.”

Many people have spoken bitterly about the way in which the Indians of the South robbed the cattlemen. It must be remembered that in 1881-2 the Indians were literally starving as a result of the disappearance of the buffalo. They saw herds of cattle on the open range; they were hungry, they had been trained from infancy to steal. The young men were coming into full manhood; their forefathers had gone on the war-path and had travelled far and brought back much booty and many scalps. Now they were penned up in reserves, restricted in all directions by the white man and his laws. Little wonder that the young men were restless and rebellious.

If one were asked to state in a brief space the most important single development in Western Canadian history, it would undoubtedly be the coming of the N.W.M.P. But it is not enough to speak of that early force in general terms. What one really means is that this particular body of men, with their wise leaders—

men like French, Macleod, Steele, Jarvis, Walker, and all the rest—their amazing restraint and self-control and their sympathy for and understanding of the Indians, undoubtedly saved Western Canada from scenes of indescribable horror and wide-spread rebellion.

CHAPTER XIV

THE INDIANS' FRIENDS (*Continued*)

NEXT to the buffalo, undoubtedly the horse was the greatest friend of the red men on the western plains. Various traders and explorers have mentioned the intelligence and sagacity of the Indian pony. Professor Henry Hind of Cambridge who was in charge of an exploring expedition in the Canadian North-West during the years 1857-1858 has a whole chapter of his book devoted to this subject.

"A good Indian horse," he says, "possesses excellent characteristics, the result of training, which it may be interesting to enumerate. When galloping after a buffalo, an Indian horse watches the animal as intently as his rider, always swerving when he observes the buffalo's tail begin to vibrate, and breaking into a short gallop at his utmost speed when he observes the tail erect, a sure indication of an immediate change. The rider may with safety entrust himself to his horse if mounted on a trained buffalo runner; he will be carried within three yards of the flanks of the animal, and safely withdrawn when danger is threatened. If the horse stumbles and throws his rider, he stops in-

stantly and waits for him to mount again. A beautiful mare loaned to me by a Blackfoot chief ran away with me at terrific speed during a buffalo hunt. I was unable to stop her, but after she had covered a distance of two or three miles she stumbled and threw me over her head, whereupon she stopped, turned round, and stood quietly by my side waiting for me to remount. The Indian also found his well-trained buffalo hunter the best kind of watch-dog. If during the night his horse showed the slightest sign of uneasiness, such as staring about instead of feeding quietly, or while feeding stopping to listen, or snuffing the air, the owner would immediately proceed to investigate the cause."

An excellent example of this is found in the story of a massacre which took place in the Cypress Hills about seventy years ago when a band of Piegans, camped for the night in a coulée, were discovered by a roving band of Assiniboines from the Qu'Appelle Valley. Making a wide circle about the unsuspecting Piegans, the Assiniboines' plan was to pen them in and at a given signal fall upon them in a surprise attack. There were about 170 Piegans in the valley, sound asleep, and their enemies numbered nearly four hundred. Suddenly the long-drawn-out howl of a coyote, which was the signal of attack, sounded through the hills. Nothing could have been more commonplace, coyotes howled at all hours of the night and ordinarily the horses paid no attention, but

there was a peculiar quality in that howl unnoticed by the sleeping Piegans, but instantly recognized by the hobbled horses. In a wild rush, handicapped as they were, they rushed to the tents where their owners slept, and over 100 of the Piegans escaped who otherwise would have suffered death with their brothers. The Prairie Indians became strongly attached to their horses and often kept a favourite animal in a tent when in the neighbourhood of the enemy, or among noted thieves of their own tribe. In fact as we have already noted, it was a common custom to sleep with the favourite horse tethered to the wrist. One of the stories Chief Crowfoot used to delight in telling, was how, as a young man, he once entered the camp of his enemy the Crow Indians, cut the lariats of three fine horses attached to their owners' wrists and got away without waking a soul. One of the extraordinary things the white man discovered about an Indian horse was that it was almost impossible to drive him away from a prairie fire. According to Professor Hind, of Cambridge, many horses were burned to death every year on account of their being unable to comprehend the danger in a prairie fire. The reason he offers for this strange stupidity is the fact that during the fly season Indian ponies are taught to stand with their heads in thick smoke to escape the torment of flies and mosquitoes.

Next in importance to the buffalo and the horse as the friend of the red man, was his invaluable dog. The dog was the great standby

of the squaws, who had to attend to all the duties of the camp while the men enjoyed themselves hunting and fighting. Harnessed to a *travois*, the mangy-looking, ill-fed Plains dog dragged the camp furniture, the provisions, and the small children. Sometimes these animals would go a whole week without food, and yet could get into condition for a hard journey after a few days of proper feeding.

"I have seen them," says Professor Hind, "devour large pike alive just as they were taken from the nets, and it was always necessary to place all articles bearing the least resemblance to leather well out of their reach. A careless Indian would often awake in the morning to find his harness eaten or his long dog-whip devoured. Sometimes they would eat the long rope of buffalo hide used for tethering the horses."

Among the Crees, dogs were often used on certain feast days, and large numbers were consumed. At one of these feasts, during which sacrificial offerings were being made, Professor Hind had an amusing experience. He was visiting Mis-tick-Koos, the great chief of the Plains Crees, and they had been sitting in a large family tent for several hours while Mr. Hind wrote down in his note-book information about the country and habits of the people. Three of Mistickoos' wives were present and about fifteen of his children, while outside two or three hundred dogs howled to the moon. During the conversation, Hind rose from the bundle on

which he was seated in order to examine closely some very fine arrows which one of Mistickoos' sons was making. Presently he sat down again, but this time on another bundle of robes close to the young Indian who was making the arrows. Immediately the buffalo robes on which he was seated began to move, and with a violent upheaval he found himself thrown headlong into the fire in the middle of the tent. Mistickoos and his wives and the children shrieked with laughter, shouting to each other in Cree. Hind rose to his feet and looked around indignantly to see who had played such a trick on him and found that he had been sitting on Mistickoos' fourth wife. Hearing the laughter, a great crowd of Crees entered the tent and Mistickoos told them with tears running down his face, how the white man had sat upon his best wife and how she tossed him into the fire like a buffalo tossing a colt.

It was Mistickoos, by the way, who revealed to Professor Hind the method used by the Plains Indians in decorating the body with coloured pigments. Vermilion was the favourite colour, but white, green and blue were often used, and the face, chest and arms were painted. The operation was performed with a needle, a thorn, the point of a knife or a piece of flint. The design was cut into the skin and the colours rubbed in much the same way as sailors are tattooed. In his book *Narrative of the Canadian Exploring Expeditions* 1857, Hind estimates the numbers of Indians in Alberta as follows: in

the Edmonton, Fort Pitt, and Rocky Mountain House districts about 30,000 Crees; in the Calgary, Lethbridge, Cardston countries, the Blackfoot numbered about 2,000 lodges, with an average of eight persons to a lodge, making close to 16,000 people. This estimate of course does not include the large numbers of Blackfoot living south of the border in Montana. He also concluded that the Blackfoot owned on an average ten horses to each tent, which would give them 20,000 horses or more, while the Crees he stated had an equal, or greater number of dogs. If Mr. Rowand, the famous factor of Fort Edmonton, was correct in his statement of about this same period, that there were 4,000 Cree lodges in Fort Edmonton, Battleford districts and ten dogs to every tent, there must have been at one time 40,000 dogs in northern Alberta. It will also be seen that if the buffalo, the horse, and the dog were the three great friends of the Plains Indians, they had no reason to complain of being lonely.

CHAPTER XV

RELIGIOUS BELIEFS

THE STORY OF SCAR-FACE

THE religion of the red man was closely allied to nature; his superstitions and beliefs were based upon the magic powers of various sacred animals, such as the Carcajou, the beaver, the white buffalo, etc. Fundamentally the Plains Indians held a common belief in a mythical being referred to as "The Old Man" who created the earth and all that live on the earth, but details of worship and the legends upon which faith was established differed in every tribe. It is altogether likely that the religion of the Blackfoot did not differ greatly from that of the Cree and the Assiniboine until after he came into possession of the horse. But from that time, probably the early years of the eighteenth century, he began to wander afield and make frequent contacts with the far southern tribes; then he adopted the religion of the South, which is a form of the ancient cult of Sun Worship. From the southern tribes the Blackfoot probably acquired the belief that the Sun is the supreme God of the universe. But one of their legends would indicate that they believe that it was one of their own ancestors, by the name of Scar-Face, who gave them their

knowledge of the Sun and taught them the ceremonials and rites of worship.

The following legend tells the story of Scar-Face and how he brought to earth the message of the Sun-God.

"In that far-back time, a very poor young man, who had upon his face a deep scar, asked a very beautiful young girl to marry him. She laughed at him, made fun of him, and replied that, when he removed the scar from his face, she would do as he asked.

"Scar-Face left camp; wandered far in quest of some way to remove his disfigurement. He met, one after another, many animals, and asked them to help him, but always they referred him to some other animal, farther on, who, they said, might have the power to efface the scar. So travelling, he came at last to the shore of a great lake; so large was it that if there was land on its other side he could not see it. He had now met all the animals, obtained no help from them, and so, discouraged, lay down at the edge of the water to die. Came then two swans swimming near the shore, and asked him what was his trouble. He told them, and they said that far out in the lake was an island on which Sun had his home, and they believed that he could remove the scar. Anyhow, they would take him to the island, and he could ask Sun to do it.

"As the swans told him to do, he lay down

upon their backs and they bore him out to the island. He landed, and at once met a handsome young man who told him that he was Early Riser (Morning Star); that Sun was his father, and Night-Light (the moon) his mother. His father was away upon his daily journey across the blue, but his mother was at home; he would take Scar-Face to her and she would give him something to eat.

"It was a very large lodge that Morning Star led Scar-Face into, and furnished with belongings of the occupants. Night-Light, sitting upon her couch of fine furs, greeted him kindly, gave him food, asked him whence he had come, and for what reason he had journeyed so far from his people. He told her of his great trouble; his desire to be rid of his scar so that he could marry the beautiful girl of his tribe; and she told him to be patient, that it might be done. But when Sun was about to return from his daily travel, she feared that he might be angry when he saw Scar-Face in his lodge, and so hid the youth under one of her white buffalo robes.

"Sun returned, but, instead of entering the lodge, he stopped at the doorway, and said: 'Ha! I smell a human being.'

"'Yes. A good young man. We are friends. Do not harm him,' said Morning Star.

"Sun then entered the lodge, went to his couch and sat down, spoke to Scar-Face, who had come out from under the robe. 'I am glad that you are here with us. Remain with

us. I am glad, for the sake of my son, that you are his friend. He often becomes lonely; your presence will be good for him.'

"On the following day, after Sun had started out upon his trail across the blue, Night-Light said to Scar-Face: 'As you and my son go here and there upon this island, there is one thing I want you to do: never let him go near a gathering of big birds that have long and sharp bills, for they are very dangerous. They have killed my sons that I had before this one. I don't want them to kill him.'

"Scar-Face promised to do that. Several days later, as the two were at the end of the island, they saw a gathering of the birds in the water close to the shore, and Morning Star said to Scar-Face: 'There they are, the bad birds that killed the children my mother bore before me. Let us fight them.'

" 'You must not go near them. I promised your mother to keep you away from them,' Scar-Face answered.

"But Morning Star would not listen. He ran toward the birds, and they hurried ashore and came angrily toward him. But they never got to him, for Scar-Face ran in front of him and with his spear killed all of the birds.

"They took home with them the heads of the birds, showed them to Night-Light, and Morning Star told her that Scar-Face had killed all of the bad ones. Then was her

heart glad. She hugged Scar-Face; said that he was a real son to her; and when Sun returned, she told him how he had saved their one remaining son from the long-billed stabbers. Then was Sun pleased, too. He said that Scar-Face had done a great favour to him and Night-Light; that he would never forget it; and offered to do anything that he could in return.

“‘Then relieve me of this scar; make my skin smooth, so that a beautiful girl of my tribe that I want, will have me for her man,’ Scar-Face replied.

“‘I will remove it,’ said Sun. And he rubbed a black medicine upon the scarred cheek; rubbed it off, and there remained not the least trace of the deep scar. He was pleased with this that he had done for the poor one. So were Night-Light and Morning Star.

“‘But that was not all that Sun did for the young man. First saying that he was the chief, the ruler of the Above People, and of the earth and all life upon it, he instructed Scar-Face just how he and his kind should worship him, so that they might have long life, prosperous life, there upon the earth. The most important rule that he gave was that, each summer, a large lodge should be built in honour of him, and its centre post hung with offerings of things that he most valued, and chief of them was the hide of the white buffalo, softly tanned. So many were

these instructions for the welfare of the people that he was several nights in explaining them to Scar-Face and at last, when he had finished, he led Scar-Face out a little way from the lodge, pointed out to him a long, white trail, told him to follow it, and he would soon again be with his people. Scar-Face started off upon it; the Wolves' Trail it was (the Milky Way), and it ended close to the camp of his people. He entered the camp, sought the beautiful girl, and she was glad to become his wife. He then gave to the people all the instructions that he had brought from Sun for their benefit, and they have been faithfully followed to this day."

THE O-KAN (SUN DANCE)

Sun Dance is the anthropologists' term for the annual religious offering of the Plains Indian tribes to their sky gods. The early fur-traders in the North-West named it the Medicine Lodge, the adjective in this case having a spiritual meaning. As applied to the Blackfoot tribes' offering, it would seem to be the better term, for dancing is the least important part of its ceremonial rites. The Blackfoot name for it is *O-kan*, and they say that the meaning of the word has been lost. Yet it seems to be sleep, or dream, for closely allied to it are, *ots-okan* (his sleep); and *opûp-okan* (his vision-sleep).

The Medicine Lodge, as we shall continue to

call it, is the result of a vow made to Sun. With the Crows, Sioux, Cheyennes, and Arapahos, a man makes the vow, but with the Blackfoot it is a woman, for it was a woman, Tail-Feathers Woman, who, even more than Scar-Face, brought from Sun himself the request that the people should build it for him and his wife and son. So is it that when a woman's husband, son, or other near relative is ill, or off to war and in great danger, she may, if pure and virtuous, publicly vow to Sun that if he will make well the sick one or help the absent one to survive all dangers, she will in the coming summer build a Medicine Lodge.

In Father Lacombe's letters a very striking comparison is found between the stories told by the Blackfoot and Cree Indians concerning the creation, man's first appearance on the earth, the flood, the Tower of Babel, etc., and the same stories as related in the Old Testament. Many people familiar with these Indian legends of the creation and the flood have attributed their likeness to the Bible stories to the fact that early missionaries had taught them to the Indians, and in time they had taken on local colour and meaning. That is hardly likely, since the missionaries concerned themselves chiefly with the interpretation of the New Testament and its application to the customs and habits of the Indians. The fact is that stories of this type are common among native tribes all over the world. It is natural that primitive man in every country and in

every age should speculate concerning the creation of the world, the origin of human life, the first man, his rise and fall, and that he should picture these events in much the same manner as they are given in the Old Testament.

Father Lacombe found among the Blackfoot a remarkable similarity between their legends and the Bible stories of Adam, Noah, the flood, and the Tower of Babel. But in telling these stories he points out that they get Jonah and Noah and the flood all mixed up together. Here is one Blackfoot legend of creation.

“The first man was called Nenaboju, and he lived in a lodge on the water. There was no land anywhere; he had with him in his lodge all the animals gathered together. But he became weary of his floating house and he longed to see the land. So he called to him a nice big muskrat, and he said to the muskrat: ‘Now, my lad, I want you to plunge to the very bottom of the sea, and bring me back a little handful of earth, till we see what it looks like.’ So the muskrat took a deep breath and he plunged into the sea, but he was suffocated before he got half-way to the bottom. Coming back to the surface, Nenaboju revived him, and, gasping, the muskrat declared he could never reach the bottom. Then Nenaboju called the beaver to him and told him to try, and the beaver with a slap of his tail dived beneath the surface, and after a long time he came up. He had

lost consciousness like the muskrat, but he was a determined little fellow and he kept on, and when he came to the surface again he held in his little fist a handful of earth. Then Nenaboju took this handful of earth and blew on it, while all the animals sat up and watched, for as Nenaboju breathed on the earth it began to grow bigger and bigger until it was as big as an island. Still Nenaboju breathed on the land and it became vast as a continent, with hills and streams and great forests on it. Then good old Nenaboju took a wolf and said: 'Go round the earth and come back and tell us how big it is, and see if you think it needs to be enlarged or improved.' After a long long absence, the wolf came back and said he thought the world was still a little on the small side. Nenaboju continued then to breathe on it, and when the wolf was again sent out to look it over he never came back. Then Nenaboju opened the Lodge and drove all the animals out into the world and told them to look after themselves."

Here we have, slightly altered, the Old Testament story of creation, and the picture of Nenaboju breathing on the earth is a simple variation of the Old Testament narrative in which God gives man the breath of life and is seen brooding over the waters during creation.

"We find also," says Father Lacombe, "among the Indians, legends that parallel more or less

closely the Bible stories of man's fall from grace, the murder of Abel, the manna from the skies."

Here is one of them, related by an old chieftain, which has to do with the transgression of the first man:

"At the beginning of things, the old man Nenaboju had two children, a boy and a girl. To them he said: 'Behold, I have given you a rich country, full of a great quantity of every kind of fruit. Live happily in the land, believe in my goodness, hunt whenever you like and when the time comes I will find husband and wife for you and you will people the earth with good men and women. But you must never touch the fruit that is in these gardens. Do not eat the fruit.' This made the young man more eager than ever to taste the forbidden fruit, and with his sister he began to look with longing eyes at the juicy apples. Finally one day they both sat down with a basketful of the most delicious apples and began to eat. Then the old man Nenaboju came along and drove them out of the garden forever. And thus began man's disobedience to the commands of the all-wise, all-powerful God."

But when manna fell from heaven it wasn't in the form of bread, for the Indians knew nothing of bread or flour until after they had met the white man. The manna from heaven was in the form of small pieces of meat which

covered the ground each morning and which the Indians gathered in baskets to nourish themselves.

Another legend which tells of a great flood over all the earth, oddly enough begins with the history of Jonah.

“A young man and his sister were standing by a lake, when a huge fish like a whale came and swallowed the youth. His sister sat by the bank for three days and wept for her brother. Suddenly the monster reappeared, and the weeping girl heard from deep down in its belly a voice which cried: ‘Oh my sister, throw one of your moccasins to the great fish, but hold on to the laces, and when he swallows the moccasin you can pull me out.’ Then the girl took off her shoe and threw it, and with one gulp the monster swallowed it; then pulling the cords the girl pulled her shoe out and her brother was holding on to the other end. But this made the great fish very angry and he thrashed about with his great body and made such tremendous waves that the whole earth was submerged.”

In the above legend we find the stories of Jonah and the flood interwoven. Evidently the Red men were gifted with a precision in story-telling that was lacking in the Jewish historian. Here is a tale told by Father Lacombe, corresponding to the Old Testament story of the Tower of Babel.

“After the flood, the old man Nenaboju remade the earth, but in the meantime a lot of people had taken refuge on top of a high mountain, and while they were up there waiting for the waters to subside, they began to build great high towers, hollow inside like the stem of a pipe, with stairs around the outside. These towers were hundreds of feet high and were built so that if another flood came and covered the earth the people would have a place to take refuge. But while they were building the tower a terrible voice from the mountain shouted at them: ‘Behold your language is all different. You don’t understand each other.’ Then the great mountain opened and flattened out, and in a moment all they could see was a vast level plain as far as the eye could see.”

CHAPTER XVI

THE BLACKFOOT LAW OF MARRIAGE, DIVORCE, ETC.

IN an earlier chapter reference was made to the civil and military discipline in a Blackfoot camp in the days of David Thompson. In George Bird Grinnell's book, *Blackfoot Lodge Tales*, a much more detailed account is given of the social organization prevailing among the Blackfoot during the last century. It may be interesting in this last chapter to examine briefly the laws regulating such domestic matters as marriage, divorce, cruelty, theft, murder, cowardice, etc.

Marriage customs apparently were as formal and as rigidly adhered to as they ever were among European aristocracy. If a chief had a marriageable daughter, and he knew of a young man of another band who had a good reputation for courage and sobriety, he called his immediate relatives together and discussed the matter with them. If no valid objection was raised, he then notified the young man's father that the match was being considered, and asked his opinion regarding the proposed union. The father of the young man then called his nearest relatives into conference, and if the match was considered satisfactory, the young woman's

father was notified to that effect. Meanwhile the wishes of neither the young woman nor the young man were seriously considered; preparations for the wedding were proceeded with at once. The young girl's mother prepared her trousseau, which consisted of a dress made of antelope skin, as white as snow and ornamented with quills and elk tusks. Her leggings were made of deer skin heavily beaded and fringed and sometimes adorned with small bells and brass buttons; her moccasins were made of deer skin, decorated with porcupine quills.

During the days which intervened between the proposal and the marriage, often only a few weeks, the young woman was expected to select each day the choicest bits of meat, cook them with dried berries, and in company with her sister or mother cross the camp to the young man's lodge where she placed the food before him. Then she returned to her father's lodge and each day till the wedding she provided her future husband with three meals a day. This was the public announcement of the engagement. When the day of the wedding arrived, the mother of the bride packed a new lodge and all her daughter's belongings on a pair of the best horses, and moved out into the centre of the great circle of tents which made up the village. The new lodge was set up, and the father's gift to the bride—often a dozen of his best horses—was tied to the front of the tent.

Then the young man's father approached the

new home and placed on a tripod in front of the tent beautiful gifts of war-clothing, bows and arrows, shield, war-bonnet, war-shirt, war-leggings ornamented with scalps, and exactly twice as many horses as the girl's father gave the bride. As soon as the lodge was set up and the mother-in-law had gone home, the young man, dressed in his finest clothing, walked over to the lodge, and entering, often had his first glimpse of the woman who was to be his wife. A few words were spoken, then the young man ordered his bride to take down the lodge, and together they moved away from the camp, or back into the circle of lodges. But the elaborate ceremony described above was only in use in the case of very important people. A poorer, less aristocratic couple would arrange their marriage ceremony in a quiet way, the main item on the programme being an adequate exchange of horses. The Blackfoot warrior could take as many wives as he wished; but the ceremonies in common use were only observed in the case of his first wife, who was known as his "sits-beside-him" woman. In subsequent marriages it was merely a matter of bargaining with the young lady's father. The girl herself seldom had any choice in the man she was to marry. If she was told she must marry a certain man she had to obey. As a consequence suicide was not uncommon among Blackfoot girls. A girl ordered to marry a man she despised would often watch her chance, and go out in the brush and kill herself. And fre-

quently a girl who could not marry the man she loved would do the same thing.

The Blackfoot's first wife—his "sits-beside-him" woman—was invested with authority over all the other wives and was expected to do little besides direct the work of the lodge and look after the comfort of her husband. She sat at his right hand, while the other wives had their places near the door. If a man had many wives and many horses, his lodge was large and full of children and he was considered a rich man. The more horses he had the more young men he could command to hunt for him, and the more wives he had, the greater his supply of cured meats and of soft-tanned hides. If at any time a Blackfoot of substance wished to get rid of one or more of his wives, the divorce was easily arranged. He sent her back to her parents, returning whatever dowry she brought him and demanding the return of the horses which he had given in exchange. When a man died or was killed in battle, his wives became the potential wives of his oldest brother.

In cases of infidelity the woman was often severely punished; her face was mutilated by the severance of her ears or nose or both. In many instances a second offence was punished with death.

All her life, the Blackfoot woman was in subjection to some man or group of men—her father and brothers or her husband and his male relatives—but a man from his earliest

days was free and independent. His father rarely punished him and his mother dared not do so. By the time he was twelve years of age he had been on war expeditions and knew the arts of the chase. At seventeen or eighteen he was married and often resided with his family in his father's lodge until it became too crowded.

The head chief of the Confederacy was elected to office, and was chosen partly for his bravery, but mainly for his generosity and kindness of heart. For this reason the chief was never a wealthy man, for he gave with one hand that which he acquired with the other. All crimes eventually came to the attention of the tribal chief, and punishment was meted out by his orders. The law in regard to murder was the ancient law of "A life for a life", but it was sometimes modified, and a heavy payment accepted by the dead man's relatives. In cases of theft within the tribe the only punishment was the restoration of the stolen property.

Treachery—that is, giving aid to an enemy—was punished with immediate death, by the first person who caught the guilty one.

Cowardice in the presence of the enemy, when definitely established, often was punished by compelling the guilty one to wear woman's dress for life, and to refrain from marriage. Much of the ceremony connected with the elaborate celebration of the Medicine Lodge each year is in the nature of penance for sins of omission or commission, sacrifices to the Sun;

tortured bodies, the offering of a finger, a white buffalo robe, or a dish of choice buffalo tongue; all these are presents as a special means of obtaining forgiveness and favour from the greatest of all, the Sun or Napi, "Old Man".

Besides the Sun, and "Old Man" (if, as many believe, these are not the same being) the Blackfoot system of beliefs included a large number of minor deities. These were grouped under the general terms: "Above Persons", "Ground Persons", and "Under Water Persons". Of the "Above Persons" one of the most important is "Thunder" because he brings the rain, and he is usually represented as a bird. "Wind-Maker", oddly enough, is an "Under-Water-Person", and lives in dark caverns of the mountains, under the waters of the lakes. When he wants the wind to blow, he makes the waves pile high and that makes the wind. "The Ground Man" lives under the earth and typifies the power of the soil. The cold and the snow came from "Cold-Maker" who rides the clouds on a white horse.

All these beliefs still find expression in the great religious ceremony of the Blackfoot year, the Medicine Lodge. Its ceremonies, its elaborate rituals are too numerous and complicated to be included here, even if the writer understood them. Actually only a few white men know and fully comprehend the deep religious significance of the Medicine Lodge, or have even remotely estimated the strength and persistence of the red man's emotional life.

Many white men know the Plains Indians' history as a warrior and a huntsman; they see him today as a hanger-on at Stampedes and country fairs, his proud spirit still alive in spite of impoverishment and defeat. Only a few white men, and these have spent their lives among the Indians, understand and appreciate the moral and spiritual qualities of these last survivors of a great and noble race.



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